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DOWN THE ROAD TO THE EMERSONS'.

"I'm afraid you won't get ready for meetin', father, more'n nothin'."

Hiram Goodell was shaving around his mouth, and he could not speak. Not a muscle of his face moved, still he looked irascible. He stood before the kitchen glass, and shaved cautiously and slowly. He was always afraid of cutting himself when he shaved.

Hiram Goodell was a very cautious man. His wife stood by and held his vest ready for him to put on. Her hands twitched as she watched him wipe his razor painstakingly with a bit of paper and then hold it up to the light and squint at it to see if it were clean enough. She felt like snatching the razor and shaving him herself.

"For mercy sakes, father, don't be so long-winded!" said she. She was a sandy-haired woman, tall and broad-shouldered and lean. Her blue eyes were weak, and she narrowed them and wrinkled her brows when she talked. Hiram carefully scraped around his mouth and held his lips firmly pressed together. It was quite a time before he spoke, then the words came out with the added impetus of repression. "I wish you'd lay down that vest, an' go 'long 'bout your work, mother," said he, "an' not stan' there watchin' me."

"Stan' here watchin' you—I'd like to know if you ever get anywhere, father, if I didn't foller you. I'd jest like to know what you would do."

"The bell ain't tolled yet."

"The bell ain't tolled! That's jest the way you talk, father. What if it ain't, you can't walk down there under twenty minutes, an' you know it. An' it's time for it to toll now. This clock's ten minutes fast.

But there you stan' as deliberate as if you'd got a week before you."

The old man muttered something. His wife laid the vest on the table and the buttons rattled.

"Well, you can swear if you want to," said she, "a man as old as you be an' professin' what you do."

She turned herself about with a majestic air.

"I wa'n't swearin'. You say pretty hard things, mother." The old man's tone was suddenly humble and conciliatory.

"I know what I hear. I've got ears."

"If it's got so anybody can't speak without bein' told they're swearin, I guess I might as well keep my mouth shut all the time. I think you go most too far, mother."

Hiram now went to the sink, and washed his face long and thoroughly; his wife had turned the water into the tin basin for him. She eyed him sharply when he had dried his face on the roller-towel.

"Stan' round here, father!" said she.

She dipped a corner of the towel in water, and dabbed energetically at his ears. The old man stood still with his face screwed up, finally he made a break away from her:

"As fer standin' this, I ain't goin' to!" said he. "I dunno what you think I'm made of, mother."

He glared at her resentfully.

She emptied the water from the tin basin, and put the soap back in the dish.

"I guess you ain't hurt very bad," she returned. "I'd like to know what kind of a figure you'd cut to the folks that sit behind you, if I didn't look out for you a little. You don't have any more thought for your ears as if they didn't belong to you. Now don't stan' l any longer, father, for mercy sakes! Your coat an' your hat are on the settin'-room lounge, I've brushed 'em. Seems to me the bell's tollin' now."

But the bell had only just begun to toll when Hiram Goodell had left his own yard and was fairly out in the road. The long bell tones came sweet and clear through the frosty air. It was very cold for the season,

and there was no snow on the ground. The road was frozen in great ridges. The rough ground hurt the old man's tender feet, and he stepped gingerly and toed in to save them. He was large and lumbering, and could not walk easily. The church was half a mile away, and the Emersons' a quarter of a mile. Before he came to the Emersons' he passed the house where the Lord sisters lived. It was a square white house with four windows in front. Two belonged to the sitting-room and two to the parlor. At each of the sitting-room windows a head with a black lace cap and spectacles was visible. The heads were bent down in a peering attitude so as to clear the obstructions of the sashes; the spectacles themselves seemed to squint curiously.

The old man, passing close under the windows, looked up and bowed gravely and stiffly.

"Always a-peekin'!" he thought to himself with a slow masculine disapprobation of curious women. Hiram had never in his life looked out of a window to see who was passing, so far as he could remember.

Down the hill, and beyond the Lords' with no house between, was the Emersons'. That was a one-story house, large on the ground but very low. It had been painted white, but it was now gray, the roof was lurchy with loose shingles. In the wide side-yard were a straggling wood-pile and an old farm-wagon. Hiram did not look squarely, but he took it all in. As he passed, he held up his head quite high, and toed out firmly, in spite of the frozen ground. He did not appear to be looking, but he saw quite plainly a figure come to one of the front windows, then start back; he saw the front door open a little way, then close with a jerk.

"They saw me comin', an' went back," he thought to himself.

When he was well past the house, the door opened again, and an old man and a young woman appeared. They came out of the yard and proceeded down the street, behind Hiram, who clumped along with solemn deliberation. The bell had now nearly stopped tolling, and the Emersons felt in haste. They sat well toward

the front of the church, and were abashed when they went in, if it were late. But they could not quicken their pace without overtaking Hiram, and they did not want to do that.

Foster Emerson had a weakly, nervous gait. He walked with alacrity, but when he swung himself forward, his knees appeared to weaken under him. It was almost like a slight lameness. His daughter Fanny walked like him. Fanny was thin and sharp-featured and pretty. She had a lovely color on her cheeks, that deepened as she went on in the frosty air. Her stiff black beaver coat hung straight half-way to her knees; there were shiny lines around the seams, where she had tried to remodel it. She held her hands in a small old-fashioned fitch muff, and walked soberly on beside her father. Hiram in front of them never quickened his pace at all. The bell had quite stopped ringing when they reached the church, and there were no people in the vestibule; even the sexton had gone in.

Hiram opened the door and tiptoed up the aisle; his boots squeaked. The Emersons did not enter until he was fairly seated in his pew. Then he did not appear to watch them, but he saw them quite plainly. He even noted a little red feather on Fanny Emerson's black straw hat, and wondered how much it cost. It was so bright, he thought it must be expensive. The Emersons were now very straitened in their circumstances, and the Goodells watched them narrowly, and appraised jealously everything they had. There was a feud between the two families, a New England feud. There was no blood shed; there would never be any breaking of orthodox trammels, but the Goodells and the Emersons had hated each other stiffly and rigidly, after the true manner of their Puritan blood, for the last ten years. There had been a piece of woodland, whose possession was disputed. The question had been carried to law, and Foster Emerson had won the suit, while Hiram Goodell had to pay the costs, as well as to lose his claim. He had considerable property, but he was close with it; it was an awful thing for him to pay his hard-earned dollars to the lawyers, in addi-

tion to giving up his own will. Hiram Goodell was a New Englander of New Englanders. He could not carry on a Southern vendetta, but he could walk hand-in-hand with hatred with an iron grip. To-day he seemed as bitter toward Foster Emerson as he had been ten years ago. The one thing that could have served to ameliorate his wrath had apparently not yet done so; that was Emerson's ill-fortune. It almost seemed as if the law-suit had been decided unrighteously and so brought a curse with it. Poor Emerson had the disputed woodland, and bad luck had seemed to fly out of it in his face like a bird. The wood was standing ready to be cut, when it came into his possession; the week after, it had burned to the ground. In ten years' time it had grown again, this winter he was to have cut it, but the summer before, it had been burned for the second time. The Emersons had dark suspicions, but they never mentioned them. Indeed, they were not well founded. Hiram Goodell was not capable of setting fire to his enemy's wood. He would never think of such a thing.

However, the night when the wood had burned, he and his wife watched the red glare on the sky, and neither of them was sorry. His wife spoke with a certain stern triumph like the Psalmist, "I can't help thinkin'," said she, "that it's a judgment on him." She and Hiram rather regarded all Emerson's misfortunes as judgments, and there had been a great many of them. His son, whom he had depended upon for the support of his old age, had died, his wife had been delicate, his stock had gone down with the cattle-evil, his crops had failed, and his house was heavily mortgaged. This year the strain to meet the interest-money had been terrible. It had been whispered about town that Emerson would fail to do it, and lose his place. But it had been done, although nobody knew with what difficulty. The Goodells had speculated a great deal as to whether Emerson would pay it. One day Hiram came home with the news that he had.

"It's so," said he. "I got it from young Simmons, an' his brother's in the bank." He half-sighed uncon-

sciously. He had an undefined feeling that this time the shaft of the Lord had missed his adversary.

"I s'pose it must be so then," rejoined his wife.

She would not have recognized her own sentiments on the subject had she seen them. She was not a hard woman, but, like her husband, she had that grim clutch at a resentment that came from her blood. Then too she was fond of money, and she dwelt constantly upon their loss. She liked nice things in her house, and nice clothes, and she had stinted herself defiantly ever since the affair of the woodland. "I could have a new black silk dress every year, and a new parlor carpet, if we hadn't been cheated out of so much money," she was wont to say. She expressed her mind upon the subject quite freely to the Lord sisters. They had a shrewd way of leading her on, and Mrs. Goodell, for all her decision, had at times an innocent unconsciousness that she was being led. The Lord sisters, one or the other, or both, ran over nearly every day, and sat down a few minutes for a little talk.

Thanksgiving morning, some half an hour after Hiram had gone to church, Jane Lord came over. She brought a white bowl. She wanted to borrow a little sugar; she feared they had not enough to sweeten the cranberry-sauce.

"I'm ashamed to come borrowin' sugar Thanksgivin' mornin'," said she, "but we didn't neither of us know how to go to the store, an' we didn't think of it's bein' quite so near out."

"You can have it jist as well as not," said Mrs. Goodell.

After the bowl was filled with sugar, Jane Lord sat holding it for quite a while. She had something on her mind that she wanted to say, and she led up to it delicately.

"I see Mr. Goodell goin' to meetin'," she remarked after a little.

"Yes, he went," returned Mrs. Goodell.

"Well, there ain't many to go in this neighborhood, Thanksgivin' mornin'. You have to stay to home to get the dinner, an' Rachel and me do. We ain't

neither of us fit to get it alone. Then there's the Emersons—I dunno but Fanny an' her father go."

"I dunno whether they go or not," said Mrs. Goodell in a stately and indifferent manner. She was on her way to the oven with a spoon to baste the turkey.

Jane Lord sat holding the bowl of sugar, and pursing her lips softly. She was sallow-faced, and there was a sad droop to her features. Her voice was unexpectedly quick and strident.

"Speakin' of the Emersons," said she, "I was down to Mis' Silas Grant's the other day, you know she's Mis' Emerson's cousin, an' she was tellin' me how dreadful bad off they was. They've had to rake an' scrape every cent they could lay their hands on to pay that interest-money, to keep a roof over their heads, an'—" Jane lowered her voice, she leaned forward confidentially—"Mis' Grant said—I don't s'pose she thought 'twas goin' any further, but I'm goin' to tell you—that—*she didn't b'lieve they had enough to eat!*"

Mrs. Goodell was down on her knees before the oven, basting the turkey; the savory odor steamed out into the room.

"Well, I wouldn't tell it if I was Mis' Grant," said she, "her own cousin, an' Silas Grant's rich. Why don't she give 'em somethin' to eat?"

"Folks ain't always so fond of givin'," rejoined Jane with asperity. "An' there ain't no use in givin' to some folks. Foster Emerson's bound to lose every cent, an' always was. He ain't got no judgment."

Mrs. Goodell went back to the table with the spoon. She had resumed her indifferent air.

"I guess they're got enough to eat," she remarked; "you can't make me believe they ain't."

"Mis' Grant says they ain't, an' what's more——" Jane paused a moment, "*I know they ain't!*" added she impressively.

Mrs. Goodell stopped and looked at her. Jane continued with a sadly triumphant air, "I was in there myself a few days ago, an' I see a few things."

"What?"

"Oh, I kept my eyes open, an' I see. It was supper

time, an' Mis' Emerson, she wouldn't set about gettin' supper 'cause she hadn't nothin' to put on the table, an' she was ashamed, an' I wanted to borrow a spoonful of ginger, an' I followed her into the buttry. She didn't want me to, she kept sayin' she'd bring out the ginger, but I was bound I would, an' I did. Mis' Goodell, it's the livin' truth, that there wan't enough in that buttry to feed a baby."

"I guess she had some things put away."

"No, she didn't. Mr. Emerson he called her out a minute, jest before I went home, an' I jest slipped in there again, and I peeked in two or three jars, an' the flour barrel—*There wan't nothin'.*"

"Well, it's awful thinkin' of anybody not havin' enough to eat," said Mrs. Goodell.

She was frowning deeply as she went about her work again. Jane Lord continued to expatiate upon the sad case of the Emersons.

"An' that ain't all," said she, eyeing Mrs. Goodell sharply. "They ain't got enough to wear to keep 'em warm this cold weather, 'cordin' to my belief. You ought to see the clothes they have out on the line. Of all the patched-up flannels, an' so thin you can see the light through 'em—an' the clothes they wear outside ain't hardly decent. Mr. Emerson's great-coat is all threadbare, an' it's a bright green across the shoulders, an' Mis' Emerson's looks as if it came over in the ark. An' Fanny ain't no better off. Mis' Grant says she had to take every cent of her school-money to pay in toward that interest. I don't believe she nor her mother either has had a new dress for three year."

Mrs. Goodell was still frowning. "Well, I dunno, I'm sure," said she.

"Well, I dunno neither; but it seems pretty hard lines to think of folks a-sufferin' right amongst us Thanksgivin'. I ain't no idea they've got a turkey nor a puddin'. Well, I dunno what folks can do. If men ain't got judgment, they ain't, an' I dunno whether it's the duty of them that has to support them that hasn't, or not. I know I can't afford to. Well, I must be goin', or Rachel'll think I'm makin' sugar."

After Jane Lord had gone, tripping shiveringly down the road with the sugar, John Goodell, Mrs. Goodell's son, came. He lived in a town some fifty miles away, the railroad connections were not very good, and he could not reach home much before Thanksgiving noon.

The young man entered the kitchen door, and a gust of fresh cold air came with him. He set his valise down on the floor, and shook hands with his mother. He did not kiss her. The Goodells were not demonstrative among themselves.

"Well, mother, how goes everything?" said he.

"Pretty well," replied Mrs. Goodell, looking at him with a kind of repressed delight.

"Father gone to church?"

"Yes."

The son strongly resembled his mother, only he was better looking. A certain blonde harshness of feature, that did not set well upon her, was quite attractive in him. People called John Goodell a very good-looking young man. He took off his overcoat and hat, and sat down in the kitchen with his mother, and watched her work, and chatted with her. He had not seen her for some six months.

He inquired after the neighbors in a furtive fashion, as if he were stepping on debatable ground.

"How are all the neighbors getting along, mother?" he asked. He picked up a raisin and put it into his mouth with a careless air, and chewed it absorbedly, but his face began to flush.

"Well, I guess they're gettin' along 'bout as usual," his mother replied guardedly.

"How are the Lords?"

"Pretty well, I guess. Jane was in here this mornin'."

"How are—the Emersons?"

"Well, I dunno."

The young man tried to speak in a jocular way, but his face was very red.

"Well," said he, "I guess I'll find out. I think I'll go down and call on Fanny some day while I'm here."

His mother was stirring some butter into a dish of squash. She stopped short, and surveyed him.

"John, you ain't goin' down there, when you know how your father an' I feel about them Emersons?"

"I ain't been down there for quite a while, because I knew how father and you felt, mother."

"Ain't you goin' to keep on?"

"I don't know."

"I don't see for my part what you can see in that Fanny Emerson, little, thin, peaked-nosed thing. There's lots of girls I should pick out before I should her, if I was a young man."

John straightened back his shoulders. "That hasn't got anything to do with it, that I can see, mother," said he; "I don't see why she doesn't look as well as the other girls. But we won't talk any more about it now. It's Thanksgiving Day, and I've come home to have a good time; we don't want to get to arguing over anything or anybody. Ain't the turkey most done?"

"You ain't goin' down there to see her, John?"

"I tell you, mother, I won't talk any more about it. Here's father coming."

Mrs. Goodell dropped the subject then. When it came to an argument with John, she never wished for any assistance from her husband. She had always punished him herself when he was a little boy, and she had felt fierce at the bare idea of any one else touching him.

Hiram Goodell had a sober air when he entered; even the meeting with his son could not dispel it. He had walked home from church with a neighbor, and the two men had stood talking together for quite a little while at Goodell's gate.

Presently, when John left the room for a minute, Hiram turned to his wife. "I come up the road with Abel Bemis," said he, "an' he says the Emersons are in a pretty bad box this time, an' no mistake."

"Jane Lord's been in here talkin' about it," returned Mrs. Goodell.

"What did she say?"

"She thinks they ain't got enough to eat an' keep 'em warm. I dunno, but it does seem as if a man might contrive to get along, an' have enough to eat, if he had any judgment at all."

"He ain't got any—Foster Emerson never had a mite of judgment. Well, I dunno. When you goin' to have dinner?"

"Jest as soon as I can get it on the table. I want you to go out to the well an' draw me a pail of water before you take your boots off."

The Goodells generally despatched their meals quickly. They were thrifty with time as with everything else, but to-day they were a good hour at the table. There was plenty to eat; all the homely richness of a country Thanksgiving feast was spread out on the table. The turkey was very large and brown.

After dinner, Mrs. Goodell cleared away the table, and washed the dishes; then the family sat down together in the sitting-room. Hiram had his religious paper, John a city one, that he had brought with him. Mrs. Goodell sat quite idle. She never sewed on Thanksgiving Day. Her conscience seemed to grow abnormal excrescences in some directions, and this was one of them. From her childhood she had held the firm belief that it was wicked to sew on Thanksgiving Day. She did not talk much; the two read, and she sat thinking. The sitting-room was scrupulously clean; there was not a speck of dust anywhere. There was a fine gilt paper on the walls, and the woodwork was very white and glossy. The fire in the air-tight stove crackled, the air was soft and warm.

About four o'clock John got up and left the room.

Pretty soon he passed the window.

"I wonder where John's goin'," said his mother. Hiram sat near the window and he looked out.

"He's turned up the road," said he. "I guess he's goin' up to see the Bemis boy."

"I shouldn't think he'd go off Thanksgivin' Day."

The Bemis house, low and red-painted with a smoking chimney, was visible up the road across a wide

stretch of field. Hiram turned again to his paper; his wife rocked, with her feet close to the stove. Presently Hiram also arose, and prepared to leave the room.

"Where you goin', father?" asked Mrs. Goodell.

"I ain't goin' far."

But he didn't return speedily. Mrs. Goodell went to the window, and saw a figure that looked like his plodding up the road.

"For the land sake, he ain't goin' up to the Bemises', Thanksgiving Day!" said she, "I should think they was all struck on the Bemises."

She looked vexed and frowning. She sat down again. Presently the fire got low, and she went out for more wood. On her way, she stepped into the buttery and looked around.

"There's that other chicken pie," said she, "and I could cut a plateful off that turkey, an' nobody'd know it, an' there's twenty mince pies, an' ten apple, an' eight squash—no there ain't—why I don't see through it. I knew there was twenty mince, an' I can't count but nineteen, an' there ain't but nine apple, an' seven squash. For the land sake!"

She counted over and over again, but she could make no more of them. She could not account for three pies.

"Well, there's enough, anyhow," said she. "I could carry 'em three or four, an' a piece of my plum-puddin', an' not miss it, I s'pose. I dunno. I dunno how they'd take it."

Mrs. Goodell stood deliberating. Then she put a stick of hard wood in the sitting-room stove, packed a basket full of provisions, put on her thick shawl and hood and started. When she got to her own gate, she stopped and looked up the road cautiously; she had put on her spectacles, but she could see nothing of her husband or son. Then she braced the basket against her hip, and went down the road to the Emersons'. The Lord sisters were at the window; she saw them with a quick side-flash of her eyes, but she did not look up. She went straight on at a good pace; the basket was heavy, but she was muscular. When she reached the

Emersons', she set the basket under a lilac-bush at the corner of the house, then she kept on to the side door. She stood before it and knocked. She heard a step inside, then Mrs. Emerson opened the door. She was a stout woman, with a pretty, childlike face. She flushed when she saw Mrs. Goodell, then she became quite pale.

Mrs. Goodell herself was pale, and she looked scared, but she spoke first.

"Good afternoon," said she.

"Good afternoon," returned the other woman with a kind of stiff timidity; then she added, "Won't you come in?"

Mrs. Goodell stepped in. Mrs. Emerson led the way to the kitchen.

"I'll have to take you in this way," she said feebly, "there ain't any fire in the settin'-room. Fanny's in there now. Somebody came to the front door, I dunno who; I'm afraid they'll catch cold."

"I'd jest as soon go into the kitchen," returned Mrs. Goodell, with anxious affability.

The two women sat down in the large kitchen.

Mrs. Goodell noticed that there was no odor of Thanksgiving cooking in it, when she entered. Mrs. Emerson did not ask her to lay aside her hood and shawl. Both women were afraid to speak, and they hardly looked at each other. Still Mrs. Goodell had a distinct purpose in view, and that gave her more self-possession.

"It's a pretty cold day, ain't it?" said she.

"Yes; it's been pretty cold," Mrs. Emerson admitted shyly.

Mrs. Goodell turned her eyes on the other's face. Mrs. Emerson's hair was quite curly over her temples; she used to wear her hair in long curls to her waist when she was a little girl. Suddenly Mrs. Goodell remembered them and how pretty she had thought her. They had been schoolmates when they were girls.

"Seems to me you look kind of pale, Nancy," said she.

Mrs. Emerson looked at her—then she put her hands up to her face.

"Oh, Lois!" she sobbed, "you dunno what I've been through lately!"

Mrs. Goodell sat immovable in her chair, but her eyes suddenly became red.

"Don't take on so, Nancy. Mebbe the worst of it's over," said she.

"I dunno how the worst of it's over. Foster ain't got a thing to do this winter, an' we ain't got a cent of money. Fanny's had to put in all her poor little money toward the interest. Oh, Lois, it's been dreadful!"

Mrs. Goodell had out her handkerchief. "Look here, Nancy, there's somethin' I want to say—I s'pose you've been feelin' hard 'cause I ain't been in, an' I know I've had hard feelin's myself—an' I'm willin' to let it all go now, an' go back an' forth jist as we used to, if you are."

Mrs. Emerson sobbed so that she could hardly speak. "I guess I'm willin'!" she said. "Oh, Lois, you dunno how it's worried me, when we used to be so intimate! It's been a dreadful trial to me. I've told Foster, time an' time again, that the woodland weren't worth it. An' I wish Mr. Goodell had it this minute; we've jist had it to pay taxes on this ten year, an' that's all it's 'mounted to. I wish the lawyers had decided the other way 'round."

"There ain't any use talkin' about that," said Mrs. Goodell. "We'd better let that all go. There's somethin' I'm goin' to ask you, Nancy, an' you mustn't be offended. How are you off for things?"

Mrs. Emerson's tears seemed to suddenly stop flowing, her pretty face grew very red. "Lois," said she with a certain dignity, "we're dreadful poor. It's much as ever we've got enough to eat an' wear."

"You wait a minute," said Mrs. Goodell. She hurried out of the kitchen, and presently returned with the basket. She set it down on the kitchen table, and turned toward Mrs. Emerson.

"It kinder makes me think of the times when we was

little girls an' used to have some of each other's dinner, to school," said she.

Mrs. Emerson looked at her and the basket. The tears were streaming over her cheeks again. Suddenly she took a step forward, and the two women had their arms around each other, and were crying on each other's shoulders. After a little they drew apart with a shamefaced air. Mrs. Goodell turned toward the basket, and began taking out the articles it contained. She had them all spread out on the table, when the door opened and Foster Emerson and Hiram Goodell came in. They had been out in the barn talking. Hiram had a parcel under his arm. When he and his wife saw each other, both looked frightened, but they said nothing. She greeted Foster, and he spoke to Mrs. Emerson, as if it were an every-day call. Then he cast a comprehensive glance at the table. He recognized their basket. He begun undoing the bundle he carried.

"I thought I'd bring you over a little Thanksgivin'," he said in an abashed but sturdy manner. He looked defiantly at his wife, and slowly unrolled the newspaper that he had wrapped around the bundle. Then he held it up. There were three pies, one set in another. Mrs. Goodell made a spring forward.

"For the land sake, father!" she cried, "if you ain't set the apple an' the mince pies right into the squash!"

Hiram stood still and eyed the pies dubiously. "I declare I never thought about that," said he.

"It's jist as much as a man knows," said his wife.

She helped Mrs. Emerson set the pies to rights. The two men stood by and watched. Foster Emerson's nervous face, gray-bearded and delicate-colored as a girl's, was radiant. His deep-set blue eyes were full of delighted excitement; now and then the muscles around them twitched. All at once he heard a murmur of voices in the sitting-room, and opened the door. Then he made an exclamation. The others all looked. There stood Fanny Emerson and John Goodell in the middle of the floor. John had gone to the Emersons' in the same way that his father did. They had both

gone up the road past the Bemis house, then turned into a lane, and struck off across lots behind their own, emerging from another lane, just above the Lord house, into the high-road.

Fanny and John were both blushing. When John saw his father and mother, he looked abashed for a minute, then he stepped forward boldly.

"Hullo! you here?" said he. "I've been making a little call on Fanny."

He surveyed the table and the array of food swiftly, then he placed some chairs near the stove for himself and Fanny, and they sat down. Presently the others did also; it seemed like an ordinary neighborly visit. By-and-by it was growing dusky, and Mrs. Emerson brought out the teapot. Mrs. Goodell helped her spread the table, and the two families had supper together.

It was bright moonlight when the Goodells went home. John walked on ahead whistling, and his father and mother followed more slowly. Now they were alone together, both felt somewhat stiff and embarrassed. It was not until they were past the Lord house that Hiram spoke.

"I ain't told you what I told him I'd do, have I?" he queried.

"No, you ain't."

"Well, I told him I'd give him a job cuttin' wood for me all winter, if he wanted it, an'—I've 'bout made up my mind I'll buy that woodland of him. He can part pay up his mortgage if I do. The wood won't be ready to cut on it for another ten year, an' there's the taxes, but I dunno but I'd better."

Hiram's old face in the moonlight had at once a rueful and a heroic expression.

"Well, mebbe you'd better," said his wife, with a sigh.

It was quite late when they reached home, but late as it was, Jane Lord came over again. She had a cup and she wanted to borrow some yeast. She did not sit down, but she stood hesitating at the door, after the cup was filled.

"I want to know," said she, "if I see you all goin' down the road to the Emersons', this afternoon."

Mrs. Goodell drew herself up. She looked quite frigid and stately. "Yes," she replied, "what of it?"

"Oh, nothin'." Jane Lord looked injured and crestfallen. "I jist wondered if I did see you."

John put on his coat again, and walked home with Jane and carried the yeast. She did not allude to the Emersons again. When he returned, he paused at his own gate, and stood for a minute looking down the road. It was like a broad track of silver in the moonlight. It seemed to him as if all the Thanksgivings of his life would lie DOWN THE ROAD TO THE EMERSONS'.

The genius which, even when expressed in a foreign tongue, can still thrill and charm like Alphonse Daudet's, in the story below, is one of the choicest gifts of Heaven to humanity. The story is made into English for ROMANCE by Marion Thorne.

OLD HORNUS.

A SINGLE French regiment, on an unsheltered railroad bank, stood like a target for the Prussian army, massed in the woods some eighty yards away. As the bullets fell thick about them, the French officers ordered their men to lie down, but not one would obey. All remained proudly standing about their flag.

In that broad expanse of green pastures and waving cornfields illumined by the setting sun, that body of tormented men, enveloped in a cloud of smoke, looked like a flock surprised in the open fields by the first gust of a terrible tempest. It did indeed rain lead on that hillside! Nothing could be heard but the crackling discharge of musketry, the heavy rumbling of shells, and the ceaseless vibration of balls all over the battlefield, like the tense chords of some sinister, sonorous instrument.

Again and again the flag fell, but every time a clear, bold voice rang out above the din of the musketry, the oaths of the wounded, the death-rattle of the dying, "To the flag, boys! To the flag!"

And instantly, like a vague shadow in that fiery fog, an officer would spring forward, and the dauntless ensign, as if restored to life, would look down again upon the battle.

Twenty-two times it fell. Twenty-two times its staff, still warm as it slipped from a dying hand, was caught and raised again, and when, at sunset, the remnant of the regiment, a little handful of men, slowly retreated, the flag was but a tattered rag in the hands of Sergeant Hornus, the twenty-third ensign of the day.

This Sergeant Hornus, an old fellow who could scarcely sign his name, had been twenty years in gaining the rank of a non-commissioned officer. The miseries of the foundling and the brutality of the barracks had left their impress on his low, obstinate brow, his back bent by the knapsack, and that unscrupulous air of the trooper in the ranks. He stammered a little, too, but eloquence is not essential in an ensign. That same evening of the battle his colonel said to him, "You have the flag, my gallant fellow—well, *keep* it."

And on his shabby army-coat, worn and faded by rain and powder, the sutler placed at once the golden badge of the ensign. This was the one glory of his life. From this time the old trooper held up his head. The poor soul, who heretofore had walked with bent back and downcast glance, henceforth stood proudly erect, with eyes ever lifted to watch that scrap of cloth fluttering in the breeze, and to hold it very high, very upright, above death, defeat and treachery.

Never was there a man so happy as Hornus when he stood on the battlefield, his hands clasped about his flagstaff in its leathern sheath. Silent, motionless, grave as a priest, one would have said that he was holding something sacred. His whole life, his whole being, centred in the fingers gripped about the beautiful golden rag upon which the balls seemed to hurl themselves, and in his defiant eyes that looked the Prussians straight in the face as if to say, "Just try now to take it from me!" No one did try—not even death. After those deadly battles of Borny and Gravelotte, the flag left the field cut to pieces, literally riddled with bullet-holes, but it was still old Hornus who bore it. Then came September, the army at Metz, the siege, and that long encampment in the mud till the cannon rusted, and the finest troops in the world, demoralized by inaction, by lack of provisions and of news, died in the trenches, of fever, and despair and deadly weariness. Leaders and men alike lost confidence. Hornus alone still had faith. His tricolor rag was all the world to him, and as long as he kept that, it seemed to him that nothing was lost.

Unfortunately, as there was no more fighting, the colonel kept the flag at his quarters in one of the suburbs of Metz, and honest Hornus was very like a mother whose child is out at nurse. He thought of it continually, and when his longing for it became unendurable, he would rush off to the colonel's house, where the mere sight of his flag, resting tranquilly in its place against the wall, would send him back with courage renewed, to dream, under his soaking tent, of marches, of battles, of the flag floating gayly down there on the Prussian trenches.

An order of Marshal Bazaine destroyed these illusions. One morning Hornus awoke to find the camp in an uproar, the soldiers in excited groups shouting and talking angrily, and gesticulating toward one part of the town.

"Off with him! Shoot him!" they cried, and the officers, walking apart with heads bowed in shame before the men, let them talk on unheeded.

It was indeed shameful! To one hundred and fifty thousand well-armed, able-bodied men had just been read an order surrendering them to the enemy without a blow.

"And the flags—" demanded Hornus with whitening face.

"The flags were surrendered with the rest—the guns, the remains of the wagon-trains—everything."

"Th-th-thunder!" stammered the poor fellow, "they shan't keep mine, though."

And he set off on the run toward the side of the town. There, too, all was confusion. National guards, civilians, and *gardes mobiles* were walking about. Deputations passed, trembling, on their way to the marshal's house. Hornus saw nothing, heard nothing. He hurried up the street, muttering to himself:

"To take my flag from me! Come now, can this be possible? Let him give the Prussians what is his own —his silver plate and his gilded coaches—but this is mine. It is my honor. I forbid any one to touch it."

His sentences were broken up by his hurried pace and his stammering tongue, but, after all, the old fellow

had a plan, a clear and fixed purpose to take his flag, to carry it into the midst of the regiment, and, with any who would follow him, to fall upon the Prussians and destroy them utterly. When he reached the colonel's house, he was not even allowed to enter. The colonel too, was furious, and would admit no one, but Hornus did not understand this. He wept, he swore, he tried to push past the orderly.

"My flag! I want my flag!" he shouted.

Finally a window was thrown open.

"It is you, Hornus?"

"Yes, Colonel,—I——"

"All the flags are at the Arsenal. You have only to go there for a receipt."

"A receipt—for what?"

"It is the marshal's order."

"But—Colonel——"

"Gi—m—peace!" and down went the window.

Old Hornus staggered like a drunken man.

"A receipt. A receipt," he repeated mechanically. Finally he went off with but one clear idea in his head—that his flag was at the arsenal, and that, come what would, he must see it again.

The arsenal gates were opened wide for the passage of the Prussian wagons which were ranged in the yard. A chill passed over Hornus as he entered. All the other ensigns were there and fifty or sixty officers, silent and heart-broken. With the sombre wagons standing in the rain and the groups of men with bared heads, it was like a funeral. All the flags of Bazaine's army were lying in a heap on one corner of the muddy pavement. Nothing could be sadder than those strips of bright-hued silk, that *débris* of golden fringe and carved sticks, all that glorious paraphernalia thrown on the ground, soiled with mud and rain.

An officer picked them up, one by one, and as his regiment was called, each ensign went forward to get a receipt. Hard and unsympathetic, two Prussian officers watched the registration.

"And you are going away thus!—O, sacred, glorious tatters—displaying your rents, trailing sadly over the

pavement, like birds with broken wings! You are going away with the shame of beautiful things soiled, and each of you will carry away a little of France. In your worn folds the sunshine of the long marches still lingers. In your bullet-holes you preserve the memory of the unknown dead, fallen perchance beneath the banner, struck——"

"Hornus, you—they are calling you. Go get your receipt."

There was the flag before him. It was really his, the most beautiful, the most mutilated of them all, and seeing it once more, he seemed to be standing again on the railroad bank. He heard the balls sing, the shells burst and the colonel's voice "To the flag, boys!"

His twenty-two comrades lay there on the ground, and he, the twenty-third, was springing forward in his turn to seize it, to lift the poor flag, tottering for want of a sustaining arm. Ah! he swore that day to defend it, to guard it till death. And now—the thought of all this sent every drop of blood in his body to his head. Maddened, desperate, he sprang upon the Prussian officer, tore from his grasp his beloved ensign, and tried to lift it very high, very upright, crying, "To the fl—," but his voice died in his throat. The staff trembled and slipped from his fingers. In that weary air, that deadly air that weighed so heavily on the surrendered towns, no flag could wave, no pride could live, and old Hornus fell, crushed.

The following striking story, in which picture and reality are ideally blended, has been written for ROMANCE by L. Cleveland.

THE DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN.

THE splendid drawing-rooms were all ablaze with lights, heavy with the fragrance of exotics, and filled with the hum of fashionable voices, for the Comte de N—— was giving a reception to the *haute noblesse*, to distinguished foreigners and to deputies from the Islands of the Seas.

It would seem, at a first glance, as if the finest material from the four quarters of the earth were meeting in fine and admirable converse,—Diplomats from Denmark; Ambassadors from Italy and Sweden; Egyptian Potentates of significant sizes to cringe or cope with Westminster; ex-kings of Würtemberg and Baiern, levelling the eye a little impiously at *Vaterland*,—*Vaterland* embodied to-night in the vigor of Kaiser Wilhelm, whose bluff soldier-smile beams genially around Paris, and around the brilliant circle in the drawing-rooms of the Comte de N——; Princes of the House of Romanoff, whose finely-barred lips shut in so silently the fateful secrets of an Empire and of an Empire's exiles; Princes from Great Britain, who counted every drop of Plantagenet blood within their veins, and weighed its valiant weight against all other claims to supremacy in Europe; that is the Autocrat of all the Russias yonder, engaged so autocratically in imperious converse that he does not hear across Europe the roar of the smelting-fires shaping the bullet that will presently fit his heart to a nicety; there is the Turk, smiling in villainous proximity to peril; Austria, a trifle damp under the shadow of *Unser Fritz's* military cordage of gold lace—worn at Königgrätz. Von Moltke is eyeing the pattern-groups of deputies, dignitaries and kingcraft around the meteoric light of the Paris *salon*, with a glance that foredates 1870. You cannot take

soundings in his smile. He is gesticulating with the hand, as he speaks, as if it already held the sword of the Third Napoleon on the heights of Frénois, September the first, 6 o'clock P.M.

The hour when the *Angelus* rang over France—*Peace on Earth, Good will to man.*

A group of mild Mandarins, with a riotous light in the nine precious stones of rank upon their caps, are conversing unmildly just beyond the elbow of the greatest strategist in Europe, chatting—or chattering—with the *Maréchal* Leboeuf, who looks as if he could rebuff the devil himself as he faces round on Bismarck, who faces nobody but the Future and destiny.

That is M. Drouyn de Lhuys. The anxiety on his eyebrow is scarce fitting for the light flicker of light laughter in the gorgeous *salon.* It is such a sparkling assembly on the volcano-crust of the Empire's precipice; for a Russo-Prussian alliance has been formed on the Neva, and even Count Bismarck can afford to be a trifle jocund, now and then, to-night. He can dictate to the nephew of the victor of Austerlitz.

So the drawing-rooms glitter and sparkle—a glitter of distinction and a galaxy of stars. There is the American Minister, whose sober dress does not, however, declare much. Yet the stars and stripes are uppermost to-night, and the American Eagle is flapping its wings silently, but surely, in the brilliant *salon* of the Comte de N——, possibly in self-poised recognition of its stability beyond the seas, possibly as inaugural welcome to a Republic glimmering on the verge of the horizon beyond Sedan.

The ladies are not absent to-night,—ladies of vast titles and vast intrigues. They wear their "purchased crests" quite admirably. Ladies who are steeped in a brilliant gold dust that blurs black the dust of buried love,—women on whose brilliant bosoms brilliant secrets cower. One beautiful daughter of Eve, in apple-green brocade, whose cheeks are a bloom of ripe and fragrant fruitage, is toying with a russet-brown agate necklace which enhances the snow-blossom of her perfect throat. She glances uneasily, from time to

time, at the heavy curtains across the entrance-door of the gilded *salon*.

Expecting some one?

What can a beauty desire more than a Duke, two Counts, a serene Russian Highness, and an odd or two M. P. from Britain to talk to, to say nothing of a member of the Legion of Honor, of vast size and vast good humor to-night?

But the beauty's glance is restless and rapid toward the heavy curtains which have not lifted since Bismarck, with his jaw upon empires, entered.

The Red Ribbon is a conspicuous feature of the brilliant scene, a drop of color upon the coat, which proves the gaining of it has cost the outlay of some life-blood of one's own, or—which does not matter so much—the outlay of somebody's else.

There was quite an animated discussion going on among a large group of this Legion of Honor facing the beautiful daughter of Eve. They were standing directly under a somewhat striking picture on the walls of the drawing-room of the Comte de N——.

The painting was a copy of a fresco in the Sistine Chapel at Rome: The Last Judgment.

"I only got back to Paris from the Tyrol last Wednesday," an R. A. of London was saying. "I did not compete this year, but I hear things went strangely. Quite a surprise to some of us who had seen the canvas that ought to have taken first medal,—'The Death of the First-Born,' was it not? An extraordinarily good thing. Quite out of the usual run. He got his effect in working up that mother's face and making *it* the true midnight, deeper than any Egyptian darkness. That was a great thought. Then, that tremendous white light upon the river where it slips away into the silence. The light smites across the mother's eyes, showing up their horror as she glares down at that dead face. The light strikes, too, across those two dwellings to the left of the mother's face, I remember. The cross of blood on the Israelite's door stands out like a sheet of crimson lightning. It is very awful against that white glare of the garment of God. The first time

I saw it I felt as cold as Pharaoh. Really, the thing is extraordinarily done."

The woman's glance left the circle of dukes and serene highnesses, and sought the face of the last speaker. The gaze fluttered, and she shivered.

"*Madame, vous avez froid?*" the Serene Distinction glanced at the doorway, bent nearer, and offered his arm.

The bloom on the beautiful face burned crimson.

She smiled, shook her head, laughed lightly, and the foam of talk bubbled on again.

"Cold as that dead man there, you mean? Curious that——"

"Madame, you are ill!" Westminster stepped hurriedly forward nearer the beautiful figure that staggered, and clutched the back of a Marie Antoinette *fauteuil.*

"I—no—I—that Shadow on the window,"—she pressed her hands before her eyes for a moment—and caught her breath. "It was like—my crucifix." She laughed wildly—"The arms were stretched out, and it shivered." The woman shuddered. Her hand resting on the grand duke's was cold as death.

The circle around her bent anxiously forward. "I—no—ah, it is gone! If you will ring for my maid and—my vinaigrette."

"I saw no shadow, Madame. M. Drouyn de Lhuys and *Vaterland* have a way of raising their elbows in converse—not concord—when Europe is on the carpet." The Serene Distinction laughed. But a cold drop stood out on the woman's forehead. She shuddered again,—then laughed lightly.

"We are such poor, weak creatures, we women——"

"Say rather, Madame—" the words and look were a devotion. The Duke unfolded the fan with which the beauty had been toying.

"Did you see *Ermine* at the *Français* last night?" She seemed to have recovered her composure. "She was divine."

"Curious that he made the fellow one of the stone-cutters to Pharaoh"; the discussion among the Legion

of Honor beneath *The Last Judgment* went on. "Did you notice the name, just begun, in hieroglyph? It was a scheme to bring in that completed face of their deified hero who stares grandly out into the everlasting dark of the sanctuary—Pharaoh's father, or grandfather, or great-uncle; Rameses II. The work is at Abou Simbel, I remember."

"Monsieur is strong in his Egyptian dynasties," said one of the distinguished Red Ribbons. The accent was emphatic.

"Or weak, Monsieur Le Baron. We artists try to be Jack-at-all-trades for our trade, and, in some cases, are master of none." The R. A. laughed. "But that fellow really was a master. How did it come that he did not get first medal? He earned it head and shoulders above that stupid, simpering *Venus*. Pardon, Messieurs. The Briton is bluff. I understand that the *Venus* is from the atelier of the Duc de Virennes, talking to that beautiful woman opposite. And Grandon did not get in at all. How was it? Monsieur le Baron, you ought to be able to tell us."

The Minister shrugged his shoulders, and raised his eyebrows a hair's breadth. The R. A.'s glance caught a bland smile upon the lips of one of the Judging Committee of the *Salon*, a smile clinching as many heavy secrets as the lips of Siberia's officials.

"It's infamous if there is any trick about it!" burst out the energetic R. A. He glanced around the room, and saw again the restless, rapid eyes among the brilliant environment of princes. Their owner's bloom had paled entirely. The heavy curtains did not lift. "I was interested in that fellow. I hear he is awfully cut up about it. He worked early and late. He was to have been here to-night if the *Salon* had fitted their medal to his throat."

"Fitted something else very like—" his colleague spoke in a low tone.

The conversation was getting on quicksands, evidently, for Monsieur le Baron of the Judging Committee introduced quite apropos the question, "What do you think are the best colors to make a dead face? Raw

umber and bitumen and black and silver white and veronèse green, *n'est-ce-pas?* And is there not some talk of photographing in color? And would it not quite do away with the present plodding methods of Art? And —*on dit*—that Germany has had the first inkling of it—and that is dark news for France—" etc., etc., etc., until the rocks were past and the conversation once more steering smoothly out on the broad and glittering current of artistic debate.

"When do you go back to London, Lewis?" asked one of his colleagues.

"To-morrow, or the day after. Depends upon my mail from Wilts."

"I should like to see that picture you have been apostrophizing."

"I will go round with you in the morning, Winstone. It is really an extraordinary thing. Genius. We will cheer the fellow up, and get him to take a run across the channel and look us up in St. John's Wood and Our Merry Men a'. Do you know they say his *fiancée* is here to-night. Great beauty. That is she! In the apple-green and the snow cheeks. She is as white as death. I have been watching her. Duc de something or other is in love with her. That one with the wig, I vow, and the neckcloth. *On dit*—don't laugh so at my French! The *Bong Tong* (of Old England) are not worth a tup'ence on pronunciation. Well, they say that she is in love with this fellow of genius, but—the Duc wades in gold, etc. 'The heaviest pursed is the highest priest,' you know. That's the one whose *Venus* took first medal. I swear there's some trick in it. He has money enough to buy up Britain if the Lion were in the market. How did she get in here? Her face is her fortune, man. Moreover, the Comte de N——'s son met her at the English Ambassador's. She is a *protégée* of Madame's. And he gets her in everywhere. Superb creation! I don't mean the beauty. I was thinking of that *Death of the First-Born.* But I'd like her for a model, I vow. I know what I'd name my picture."

"What?"

"I will tell you on next 'Selecting Day.'" The

artist laughed. "Whew! Who is that portly veteran with the *corona* on his breast? One—two—three—four—five—six—seven medals. I say! Do you know him?"

"By name—yes: General the Prince Koffenshakoff."

"I should say so. And, moreover, that those medals were the eyes of some of his exiles staring at him, without winking, large-eyed because they're so lean, asking, 'What are you doing here when we?'—well and so forth, you know. It is not well to harrow your head, not to say, your heart, when you are two feet deep in fat velvet turf. I don't know half of these swells, really."

"It's a Red Letter night, not to say Red Ribbon, old fellow. I don't know half of them either. Look at that tremendous marine! He's like the pictures of Nelson—'Swell of the Ocean.' Take care! Don't cock your eyeglass that way? He has two eyes and may see you? Our 'Swell of the Ocean' had only one. A Russian, I bet. Swelling because he can't get to the ocean. Hah! What's the matter there—!" The brilliant throng was for a moment hushed. A crowd of uniforms and decorations pressed toward a distant corner of the *salon*.

Mademoiselle Céleste Angélique had fainted—that was all.

"Such a confounded heat in these rooms!" the English ambassador cautiously wiped his forehead,—"Enough to topple over a celestial."

The beautiful figure was borne by—and the talk hummed on.

"Did you see how that French Baron winced? I want to see that picture. At what time shall I look you up? By four o'clock?"

"Yes. I want to show you some effects in that *Death of the First Born*. He can teach you and me, Winstone, for next year. He has gone fifty leagues beyond us."

II.

"Come in! I can only give you a minute. I'm very busy this morning. What do you want?"

The artist looked up hastily around the corner of his easel with a frown and an impatient gesture.

"Pardon, Monsieur, but I have mounted just now to Monsieur Grandon's studio to carry him a letter, and something seems to fail him. He has not put his lamp out, and mid-day *vient de sonner*. He is lying upon his bed. There is blood upon his hands. *Mille pardons*, Monsieur, but will you go up to him? Shall I accompany Monsieur?"

The English artist started up, knocking his stool over, and dashed by the concierge, clearing the steps by three or four leaps. He stopped for a moment before a small door on the top floor in the large building known as *The Artists' Quarters*, and cautiously turned the handle.

The room was in darkness, save for one lamp on a table at the foot of the bed; the shutters had not been opened, though it was mid-day. The lamp's rays fell across a figure lying upon a cot covered with a coarse counterpane.

"Are you ill, Grandon? What's the matter, old fellow?"

There was no answer as the artist strode across the room, and bent down over the face of a man lying very white and still.

"Throw open the shutters, George. Quick! Quick! Are you ill, Grandon? Great Heavens!"

The broad light of the noonday sun fell across the small room and its litter of easels and palettes, brushes, casts, drawings, half-finished sketches in oils, portfolios stuffed with work, draperies, sketches on the walls of the Valley of the Nile—its temples and its tombs. A barely furnished room, poverty and unremitting toil in every corner of its dust and débris—a room where the worker did his work without æsthetic furnishings, a studio without even the large, customary mirror to reflect the distance drawing and perspective of the artist's work. Only bits of broken glass which the sun seized, and where it rested.

"What has he then, Monsieur? What fails him? Is he dead?" The white noonday light which poured

through the narrow window showed the blood-stains on the man's face and hands, and a splotch of red color on the coat just below the first button.

"Fetch the doctor, George, quick! There's some damage done here. I'll do my best till he comes."

The English artist plunged into a corner, and seized the few restoratives at hand, bathing the man's face and hands, and bending down to listen to his heavy breathing. A trickle of blood had stiffened upon a *journal du jour* which the man clutched in his left hand. In large letters was the heading:

EN L'ÉGLISE SAINT-AUGUSTIN À PARIS, LE DUC GEORGE RENAUD D'AUBERT DE VIRENNES ÉPOUSAIT MLLE. CÉLESTE ANGÉLIQUE, FILLE DE MONSIEUR GUILLAUME ANGÉLIQUE, DIRECTEUR DES CHEMINS DE FER ROMAINS.

The chime on the church of Notre Dame des Victoires rang One! The rapid steps of the concierge and of the physician were heard coming up the creaking stairs.

"There is some damage done here, doctor. I can't revive him. He is still breathing, though."

"Hemorrhages. Some sudden shock in an overtaxed condition. Can you account for it?"

The English artist pointed to a large easel on which a picture stood.

"Is that the work over which there has been so much talk lately? I heard there was a scheme up to rule it out,—some unfair dealing. If the fellow has any kindred, you had better fetch them. Do you know where he's from?"

"I have heard that his people live in L——, only a short distance from Paris." The Englishman hastily left the room.

III.

"Can you tell me where Madame Grandon lives?"

"*Oui, Monsieur. Monsieur* will continue down this road past the *parc* and the *jolie maison de campagne* where *Monsieur le duc de Virennes* will bring his bride to-day.

Eh bien! Monsieur will continue his way past the three *petites maisons.* He will then turn around the corner of that field. *Monsieur* sees that field of wheat? *Bon!* They will harvest that to-morrow. Does *Monsieur* see that little church spire and the cemetery? It is *justement* beyond the field of wheat. *Pauvre femme!* She has buried all her children in the little churchyard, save the one *qui va être très-riche.* He is away. He is *artiste. Il va épouser une charmante jeune fille. Ah, ciel! Elle s'appelle Céleste.* They will be *très-heureux.* Monsieur should follow this road past the field of wheat, and he will see *une petite maison* with red shutters. He will knock, and he will find Madame Grandon. Is there anything wrong? Monsieur frowns the eyebrow Monsieur understands?"

"Yes, thank you. Good evening."

The English artist smothered an imprecation, and strode on rapidly down the country lane. As he turned around the corner of the field ripe for to-morrow's harvesting, a carriage came rapidly up along the road. It had white horses. It was a very grand carriage indeed, and raised a great cloud of dust. It had two occupants,—an old man with a wig, a red nose, and the Red Ribbon of Honor on his satin waistcoat—and a very beautiful woman in a rich toilette.

With the decision of lightning the artist stopped—tore a shred of paper from his note-book—wrote a few rapid words in pencil—and whirled it with a genuine Eton fling into the 'very grand carriage.'

"*Un cadeau de noce pour la belle duchesse de Virennes.*"

The artist paused a moment, bit his lip, and flung out a few heavy comments, then continued his way, but the kind Englishman's heart sank within him as his eye searched the distance, for standing at the door of the *petite maison,* where a bar of blood-red sunset smote across her face, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking out with eager, yearning gaze up the long road that led past the wheat-field, golden in the sunset, was an old, old woman, bent with years, waiting for her boy and his triumphant return.

IV.

"This is the studio, Winstone, where I promised to shew you *The Death of the First-Born.* Grandon ought to do work head and shoulders above us, so near the terrestrial and celestial heavens. I vow I'm all out of breath. Wish the fellow lived *au premier!* These French artists have harder lives than we. How do they live and get along? We're late, do you know it? But I want to ask him how he got that white light. It's really like Gérôme's *Consummatum Est.* I mean that light in the foreground, beneath the cross,—the light that comes after the Crucifixion. Doubt if he'll tell us. The man has company with him, I hear." The door of the studio was open as the artists reached its threshold. They started—and paused, as a strange and unexpected sound burst upon them.

"Good God! What is this? The Picture, Winstone!"

Beyond the easel which held the great perspective down the midnight of the Nile Valley where the white and blinding light revealed the two—a mother and her first-born—in the corner of the room knelt an old and gray-haired woman beside the death-white face of her artist boy. Her trembling hands clutched the fingers that gave them no response. Tears were trickling down the aged withered cheeks. Her lips, pressed again and again to the face so white and still, moaned over and over with broken, shaking sobs:

"My first-born, my baby! Only one word! It is mother, dear!"

Has a mother's voice a spell to arrest the soul in its entrance into the land beyond the deep valley of the Shadow of Death? The dying lips moved; the eyes unclosed; the hand wandered feebly—then rested on the crimson Ribbon of Red blood upon the coat.

"The work—is—done," he said with laboring breath. "God — knows — that —is — success——" His fingers strayed from the last delirious caress upon the Legion of Honor's Red Ribbon of Blood, and clutched the column in the *journal du jour.* "Céleste!"—the voice called out in a hoarse summons—"Céleste!—My God!"

—the fading eyes wandered to the crucifix above the table, the pupils dilated in a horrible agony, and fixed themselves on vacancy. "SHADOW!——mother——" the chest heaved once—and again—and the jaw fell.

The group around the bedside turned away and covered their faces, for they could not look at what was before them.

V.

"Do you know what picture that is which came in a moment ago? They seem to be going to hang it up here." The English tourists stopped a workman who was hurrying through the galleries of the Luxembourg.

"*Oui, Monsieur.*"

"Curt fellow! But I think I'll wait, George. Ah, we are repaid—there it is! Heavens! this is the man the town is talking about, sure as I'm alive," he pointed to the lettering in the corner of the canvas—then to the frame: *Acquis par l'état.*

"That means, *Bought by the State*, doesn't it? Great honor, I hear. Yes, this is the man. Do you know, I was finishing a hard day's work in the fields near L—— this summer, just had a shadow to stick in with my thumb, when up came a stranger and asked me to inform him where the maker of this masterpiece was buried. Seems he had heard of it, and wanted to see the man's grave. It lies just beyond the wheat-field Winstone painted last summer. There is a very fine crucifix at the entrance to the little cemetery. Yes, this is the man," the artist leaned forward and pointed to the large gilt letters on the frame:

THE DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN.

———

A SHADOW.

The peasants have gone home from their toil. The land is very still. The sun has set some four hours ago, and the moon in her last quarter is two hands' breadth above the horizon. Her light is waning. It is a ghostly silver that falls across the silent fields stacked

with the skeleton husks of the late rich yield of corn. The long fingers sway and move in the breeze that has crept up from the river. They point some distance on. They wait for a moment as the wind catches its breath again before the sob moans and moves the tree-branches to a little shudder of sympathy. The skeleton fingers point on—then wait. They are at the wicket-gate where the little cemetery begins. The moon is still only two hands' breadth above the horizon. The pale horror of her ghostly face falls now upon two hands stretched out upon a cross. The Shadow moves—and trembles—and brims in darkness upon a cross at the head of a grave. The outline is distinct—and dilates —then vanishes as the branches sweep lower in the night-wind—and grows again in ashen reality upon the marble.

The shadow shivers as the Christ shivered upon the nails.

The moon's low light fastens now upon a woman at the foot of the grave. She is prostrate upon her face. The pale light clothes her like a shroud. The shadow quivers again—and moves—it ripples as if toward her. But the hands are held in death-throes and anguish. They cannot reach the face of lost beauty and of agony that starts up, suddenly, and flings out its hands to embrace a crucified shadow. They cannot reach her brow in beseeching or benediction.

The moon drops below the dim horizon-line.

The land is in darkness.

In this fierce satire upon woman's love, by Marie Krysinska, it may be well to mark the contrast between the three women. A mother and sister so loving (by the way, they should have had their sacrifices returned to them!) could never have made such selfish brides as the exceedingly vain one who may be called the heroine of this Russian legend. It is translated for ROMANCE by Vivia Monroe.

MOTHER, SISTER AND BRIDE.

THE prince, the young prince as beautiful as a king, is mortally wounded. While hunting in the depths of the forest—oh! the heedless hunter, distraught by the thought of the fair golden tresses, those heavy gold tresses of the princess his bride—he was assailed by a wicked wild boar which pierced him and rent him with its sharp ivory tusks.

. . . . . .

And now, as pale as a tuft of jasmine flowers, he lies among the blood-stained draperies of his bed—the bridal bed, where a few weeks before he had received the fair princess with the golden tresses. Around the bed three mourners stand—the mother, the sister, and the wife.

. . . . . .

"Let us run!" said the mother, "Let us run to the hermit-magician who lives in the depths of the forest! He only can give us a balm which will cure my beautiful prince, my prince as beautiful as a king!"

When they reached the depths of the forest, in this wise the magician addressed them:

"I can cure the young prince, I can give you a balm that will cure the young prince. But to pay for this incomparable balm, thou, mother, must give me the whole of thy right arm; thou, sister, thy soft white hand with its ring of gold; and thou, wife, must give me thy heavy gold tresses."

. . . . . .

The mother said: "Only that?" and she gave her whole right arm.

The sister said: "Take my white hand with its ring of gold."

But the wife fell to weeping and moaning: "Alas! wouldst thou rob me of my golden tresses! Oh! I cannot, cannot part with my fair golden tresses!"

The hermit-magician kept his balm.

And the young prince died.

. . . . . .

Now the three mourners are standing around the dead body.

The mother weeps as she holds the head of her prince well-beloved, struck down like a pine in the forest.

The sister weeps at the feet of the prince as beautiful as a king.

And the wife weeps near his heart—the dead heart that once beat with love so tender for her fair golden tresses.

. . . . . .

And at the place where the mother stood weeping, there sprang forth a beautiful river, the waves of which will flow on forever and ever.

Where the sister stood weeping, behold a living spring!

But where the wife wept, there came a small pool of water which was dried up by the first rays of the sun.

The fascinating, mischief-making society widow haunts the "Golden East," as well as other parts of the world. She appears in her most extreme phase in this clever story by E. Chapman, written for *Cassell's Magazine*.

THE ROCK OF KAZIM.

THIS is the true story of the rock of Kazim. I am not referring to the story of how we got it from the French, though that is a good story in its way.

This is that other story of the rock of Kazim, which has been told so often by one Anglo-Indian to another that it has ended by assuming mythical proportions. As I was the chief, I might almost say the sole, actor in the original episode, I propose to give here a short unvarnished account of what really happened, and as I am not a literary person, and don't find writing an easy task, I shall have to begin at the beginning.

My cousin, Jack Dallow, and I have been firm friends since the first day my mother took me to Dallow Court.

Jack was an only son; his father was dead, and Jack was the head of the Dallow family. He lived at Dallow Court with his mother, my Aunt Lavinia, and an unmarried Miss Dallow, our Aunt Emily.

My father, Colonel Dallow, was a younger brother of Jack's father. He was a half-pay officer, with little money and a superabundant number of children. I was the youngest of six boys, who followed closely on one another's heels, then came my two sisters, and lastly a little adopted daughter, an orphan niece of my mother's.

I was six years old, when I paid this eventful visit, and had been specially invited by Aunt Lavinia.

Jack's health was delicate, she wrote to my mother, and the doctor had advised her to get him some young companion.

She chose me in preference to my elder brothers, because, being two years younger than Jack, I should not be big enough to hurt him.

Aunt Lavinia lived in constant terror of Jack's getting

hurt, and she had an exaggerated notion of the roughness of my elder brothers.

My mother gave me many directions and cautions with respect to my behavior at Dallow, and my father promised me a thrashing when I came home if I gave her cause of complaint.

We reached Dallow in the afternoon, just as tea was going on, and found several ladies assembled in the great drawing-room. Jack was among them, talking glibly to a French lady, who happened to be among the company.

Presently he was called to play upon the violin, and his performance was really remarkable for a boy of his age. Then Aunt Lavinia would have him recite poetry to one of the ladies, and Aunt Emily showed his drawings to another of them; the rest of the entertainment was supplied by Aunt Lavinia's repeating all the wonderful things Jack had said, while Aunt Emily related the equally wonderful things he had done.

At last there came a little lull in the conversation, and Aunt Emily turned to me with the question:

"Well, Jem, and what can you do?"

The eyes of the room were all fixed upon me, and I had a dreadful consciousness that I could not do one of these fine things in which Jack was so clever.

I got red in the face, and said nothing.

"Jem!" said my mother in a warning tone.

I knew I was not behaving nicely; I must find some answer to Aunt Emily's question. My eyes turned toward the gifted Jack, and I had a sudden inspiration.

"I think I could knock Jack down," I said.

There was a momentary silence, then the ladies gave a little gasp of dismay, and the torrent burst over my devoted head.

"Oh, Mildred!" entreated Aunt Lavinia, turning to my mother with tears in her eyes, "you won't let him hurt my poor boy!"

"I think he had better be sent home again at once," said Aunt Emily; while my mother added in her severest tone:

"I shall tell your father of you, Jem."

I stood in the middle of them, choking with shame and anger, resolutely keeping back the tears which my brothers had taught me to despise, but quite unable to explain that though I had said I *could* knock Jack down, I had not had the least intention of doing so.

It was Jack himself who put an end to the situation.

He walked across the great room to the place where I was standing.

"I am not afraid of you," he said. "Come and see my rabbits"; and putting his little hand into mine, he led me out of the room, without giving any one time to interfere, and carried me off to the out-house, where the rabbits were kept.

That was the first scrape Jack got me out of, but it was by no means the last. No one ever had a better friend than I've had in Jack, though what he saw to like in me I never could understand. Perhaps it was part of his cleverness to see something that nobody else could find out.

I had a delightful visit at Dallow Court. I don't know whether the doctor's recipe of "young companionship" had anything to do with it, but Jack certainly got to look rosier and stronger during the month I was at Dallow.

Aunt Lavinia was very pleased, and said I was a good boy.

I was glad to hear it, though I was at a loss to know what I had done to earn such unusual praise, but Jack promptly seized the opportunity to ask his mother whether I could not always stop at Dallow Court.

Aunt Lavinia looked startled, my mother laughed, and Aunt Emily exclaimed:

"My dear Jack!"

Then there followed an animated discussion between the three ladies, while Jack stood serenely silent, knowing it would end in his getting his own way—the usual end of a discussion at Dallow Court.

Except for occasional visits to my own home, when Jack always insisted upon accompanying me—to Aunt Lavinia's great alarm— I spent my early years at Dallow Court.

I cannot say I shared Jack's studies—he was far ahead of me in learning—but I had the advantage of being taught by his clever French governess, Mademoiselle Lamotte, besides having lessons from Mr. Acton, the curate of Dallow St. Mary's, who taught Jack Greek and Latin.

Mademoiselle Lamotte lived at the Court, and, with the exception of Jack, she was the cleverest person in the house. The two were very fond of each other, and Mademoiselle considered that Jack was worthy to be a Frenchman.

I felt disgusted at the compliment to my cousin, and only half satisfied at hearing I should never deserve it myself. I was "un vrai Anglais, un petit John Bull," said Mademoiselle; but she gave herself endless trouble to teach me to read—an art I had not yet arrived at—and taught me to write in her flourishing little French handwriting, which laid up trouble for me in the future.

Jack had acquired the same handwriting, and we both got into rows about it when we went to school, but we never managed to alter it—a proof, Mademoiselle would have said, of the thoroughness of her teaching.

It was entirely due to the excellent education I received at Dallow Court that I got creditably through my school career, and was able to pass into Sandhurst.

Then, for the first time, Jack and I were separated. Jack went to Oxford, while I got my commission, and as my father could not make me an allowance, I went out to India, where I was appointed to the —th Native Infantry, then stationed at Feranpore, in the Bombay Presidency.

I was happy enough in my new life, and made plenty of friends, but found no one who could take Jack's place.

He promised to come out and see me, but it was five years before he could redeem his promise.

Then one happy day he wrote to tell me he was coming—could I go down to Bombay and meet him?

I applied for leave; in my eagerness, I got it at least three weeks before Jack could possibly arrive.

However, I had three months due to me, and as Feranpore was a dull little place, I determined to go at once to Bombay.

I had an invitation to stay with my friends the Bodenhams, who had a pleasant house on Malabar Hill, and there they received me with true Anglo-Indian hospitality.

"I am only sorry, Mr. Dallow," said my hostess after my arrival, "that I must give you rather a small room; we have given up our spare room to Mrs. Corfield."

"But half the young fellows in Bombay would envy you for sleeping in a cupboard, if it were under the same roof as Mrs. Corfield," remarked Bodenham.

I gathered from this that there must be something exceptional about Mrs. Corfield, and when I saw her, I was not disappointed.

She was a very beautiful woman, tall and graceful, with a gentle melancholy sort of manner, easily accounted for by the fact that she was a widow of barely a year's standing.

I could not quite make out why she was stopping on in Bombay; but she told me she was alone in the world, and one place was now much the same to her as another.

That first evening she talked a great deal to me about myself, and a great deal about herself. I learned that Mr. Corfield had been an army surgeon, and had married her from the schoolroom—"I might almost say from the nursery," she added, with a laugh; "I was so ridiculously young for a bride."

"Do you know anything of Dallow Court?" she asked, after a while.

"Dallow Court!" I repeated, "why, it's my home! But what do you know about Dallow Court? I don't recollect any one of your name in the neighborhood."

"Oh! I only heard about it when I was staying with friends," she answered, a little vaguely; and then I remembered her name could not have been always Corfield, but I did not yet feel intimate enough to ask what it had been.

"You are in luck, Dallow," said Bodenham, after

Mrs. Corfield had retired; "it's not often that our guest makes so much of a subaltern."

As for me, I was fairly dazzled by Mrs. Corfield's beauty, the charm of her conversation, and the kindness with which she treated me. My vanity was also gratified by the evident favor which she showed to me above all the other young men who crowded around her.

Even Jack's image faded for a time before this fresh object of devotion. I wished every week could be like the last week, spent in the entrancing presence of Mrs. Corfield; so long as I could be with her, I could look forward to waiting any length of time without undue impatience.

At the end of the first week, while still master of myself to make the effort, I left the Bodenhams' hospitable roof, and took up my quarters at the hotel.

I am afraid my departure was not quite the relief I had meant it to be, as I kept on haunting the Bodenhams' house, spending every minute I could in Mrs. Corfield's society, and employing the rest of my time in writing her some remarkably foolish little notes, which culminated the day before Jack's arrival in a formal offering of my hand and heart.

I thought it was a very touching letter, calculated to move a heart of stone, and I was a little down-hearted at the way Mrs. Corfield received it.

"You foolish boy, to fancy an old woman like me!" she exclaimed. "It's hardly possible to believe you are six-and-twenty."

"But I'm only twenty-four. I never said I was twenty-six."

"Didn't you? Then it was some one else."

Then I got very anxious about the some one else; and at the end of our interview I left Mrs. Corfield, certain that she had not rejected me, yet not able to feel sure she had accepted me. I had to go down now and meet the boat, and the pleasure of seeing Jack again drove Mrs. Corfield from my mind for at least ten minutes.

Then I began on the engrossing theme, and could talk of little else till we separated to dress for dinner; we were to spend the evening with the Bodenhams.

Jack listened to my outpouring with the attention which he habitually bestowed upon his companion. He even asked me an occasional question about Mrs. Corfield, but when I wanted him to express a favorable opinion of her merits, he suggested that it would be better for him to wait till he had seen her.

I was pacified by the reflection that he would not have long to wait, and we went together to the Bodenhams'.

They greeted us with their usual friendliness, and as he was introducing Jack to Mrs. Corfield, Bodenham made some joke about my taking a second place now that Mr. Dallow of Dallow Court had appeared upon the scene.

I thought the joke deficient in good taste, and was sure, from the surprised look in Mrs. Corfield's face, that she thought so too.

"How can there be two Mr. Dallows?" she asked. "Mrs. Dallow had only one son."

I hastened to explain; Mrs. Corfield was as gracious as ever.

"Your cousin has told me so much about you," she said, turning to Jack, "I have been quite longing to see you. I hope we shall soon learn to know each other."

"I hope we shall," replied Jack.

The idea that she wished to know Jack for my sake supported me through what might have proved a dull evening; as Mrs. Corfield was so taken up in learning to know Jack, she had hardly a word to bestow on me.

But I consoled myself by thinking what an impression she must be making upon Jack, and was bitterly disappointed after we left the Bodenhams' to find that he again declined to express any opinion, except that Mrs. Corfield was handsome and agreeable.

"Leave me till to-morrow, and I will tell you what I think," he replied, in answer to my importunity; and then I saw he looked pale and worried.

I reproached myself with having been inconsiderate in worrying him, when he was tired with the unusual

heat; but he said he was all right, and bade me good-night.

He did not seem to get much sleep that night. I heard him walk up and down his room, which was next to mine, and at last called out to know if he were ill.

He answered that he was quite well, and told me to go to sleep.

We did not meet till late the next morning, when I was wondering whether it would be too early to call on Mrs. Corfield, and whether Jack would think I was treating him badly if I did.

I had not been five minutes in his company before my talk had drifted round to the subject which filled my mind.

"Did you ever see such a charming woman?"

"Is Mrs. Corfield's Christian name Eugenia?" was Jack's strange reply.

"Yes; how ever did you know it?"

"Poor old Jem! I was afraid of it all along."

"Do talk sense!" I exclaimed, impatiently.

"We've never quarrelled yet, Jem, and we won't begin now, though I'm afraid you won't like what I'm going to tell you."

"If it's anything against Mrs. Corfield——" I began.

"You shall be the judge of that. I'll only tell you what I know. You remember Frank Corfield, Doctor Perry's nephew?"

"I remember Doctor Perry, but I don't recollect any nephew," I replied.

Dr. Perry was the doctor in the little town of Great Dallow, and Aunt Lavinia used to send for him, on an average, once a fortnight, to doctor some real or imaginary ailment of Jack's.

"It was that summer I had bronchitis," continued Jack, "and you spent the holidays at your father's without me. Frank Corfield was staying with his uncle; he was a lad of nineteen, a clever, kind-hearted boy, and Doctor Perry had great hopes of what he would do in his profession.

"I shall never forget the poor gentleman's distress when he told my mother that Frank had gone off, and

got married in London to Eugenia Jones, the daughter of old Jones, who kept the 'King's Arms' at Great Dallow.

"She was a very handsome girl, and old Jones, who was well-to-do, had sent her to boarding-school and made a lady of her, as he phrased it.

"But she was frivolous and extravagant; she was at least five years older than Frank, and he soon repented most bitterly of his imprudence.

"Doctor Perry was very kind to him, and by his advice and help, Frank passed the examination for the Indian medical service, and came out here. Last year, Doctor Perry told us of his death."

"And is that all you've got to say against Mrs. Corfield?" I exclaimed.

"I don't want to say anything against her, but I thought I ought to tell you where she came from."

"If you think I'm going to be influenced by the gossip and prejudices of a little country place——" I began, when Jack interrupted me.

"Never mind that. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to marry her."

"Have you proposed to her?"

"Yes."

"And has she accepted you?"

"She hasn't refused me."

"Why does she hesitate?"

"Well," I explained, getting confidential now that Jack was showing a proper interest in the subject, "I believe it's my age that's against me. I suppose it's because she wasn't happy with her first husband, who was younger than herself, but she didn't like my being only twenty-four. It seems she had thought I was twenty-six, but I don't see that two years can make all that difference. Do you?"

"It is the difference between your age and mine," replied Jack, gravely: "the difference between the owner of Dallow Court and a lieutenant in a native infantry regiment. It's a hateful thing to say, Jem, but it looks as if she had been mistaking you for me all this time. Didn't you notice how taken aback she was

last night at discovering there were two Mr. Dallows, and that I was the owner of Dallow Court?"

"And how civil she was to you, in consequence, you would say? Go on, pray! You think that being my cousin had nothing to do with her kindness to you: that's how men misjudge a woman! Why don't you say at once she was setting her cap at you last night? But I am quite sure of Eugenia's unworldliness. Look, Jack! here's a fair offer: you shall make love to her yourself, if you like, and then you'll see how much she cares for the owner of Dallow Court?"

"You've an odd idea of fairness—toward Mrs. Corfield."

"But if you think her such a bad woman——"

"It's no reason why I should treat her badly. Besides," added Jack, slowly, "there's somebody else who would have a right to object to the plan."

"Oh, Jack! who is it?"

"Ellie."

I almost hugged Jack in my delight. Ellie was my little adopted sister and the pet of our whole household. It was also agreeable, in spite of brave words, to feel I need not fear a rival in "the owner of Dallow Court."

I magnanimously forgave Jack upon the spot, and arranged for him to go out riding with the Bodenhams that evening.

Of course Mrs. Corfield was of the party, and she insisted upon riding with Jack.

"For your sake, you know, dear boy," she said to me, in an affectionate aside.

That was how it went on all the next week. Mrs. Corfield bestowed most of her attention upon Jack, but no day passed without her favoring me with some little confidential aside, a meaning glance, or an affectionate speech.

At the end of the week I was much disconcerted by Jack's announcing that he had seen enough of Bombay, and that he meant to push on at once to Kashmir.

He added that I had better come with him.

A month before I should have liked nothing better; now I hesitated how to frame my refusal.

"Well," said Jack, "what's in the way? Is it Mrs. Corfield?"

"I had rather not leave just yet."

"Are you engaged to her?"

"I told you I wasn't," I replied, with some irritation.

"That was a week ago. If I were you, Jem, I'd have it out with her. If she refuses you, you can forget her in Kashmir—the game there would make you forget anything. If she accepts you, I've no right to interfere, and I won't be so unreasonable as to suggest a separation."

There was sense in Jack's proposals; besides, I longed to be out of my suspense, and Mrs. Corfield had given me reason to be pretty sure of her feelings toward me.

I was also encouraged by the evident concern with which she heard of our proposed expedition to Kashmir; and great was my surprise, when I pressed her for an answer, to be told she could never marry a man she did not esteem, and that it would be better for us to see no more of each other. She should advise me to go with my cousin to Kashmir.

I could not imagine how I had forfeited her regard, till she informed me that she could never forgive the duplicity which had led me to represent myself as the owner of Dallow Court.

In vain I protested my innocence of this monstrous charge; Mrs. Corfield only entreated me not to add to my former deceit. She declared there was no possibility of a misunderstanding, as I had myself informed her of the fact; and when I tried to explain about my calling Dallow Court my home, and begged her to appeal to Mr. and Mrs. Bodenham, who had heard what I said, she drew herself up with an air of offended pride, asked me whether I meant to insult her by discussing her affairs with strangers, and finally walked out of the room, leaving me feeling more foolish than ever I had felt before. I went back to Jack.

"I'm ready to go with you to Kashmir to-morrow."

"Oh, Jem, I'm so sorry; but look here!" and Jack handed me a telegram he had just received.

It was sent by Ellie, to tell him that Aunt Lavinia was dangerously ill; would he come home at once?

For the moment my own troubles were forgotten as I hurried off to take Jack's passage home.

The steamer sailed for Brindisi in two days, and when we went to say good-bye to the Bodenhams, we did not see Mrs. Corfield.

Only on the following evening, as I stood on the deck of the P. & O. steamer which was to take Jack to England, I suddenly heard Mrs. Corfield's voice at my elbow.

"Good-evening, Mr. Dallow. You did not expect to see me off as well as your cousin, did you?"

She gave a strange sort of laugh, and went below before I had collected my wits.

"What a bore to have that woman on board! But I don't suppose she will want to claim my acquaintance," said Jack.

I by no means agreed with him, and later on heard from another friend who was on board that Mrs. Corfield had left no means untried to ingratiate herself with my cousin. But Jack's mind was full of his mother and of Ellie, even if he could have overlooked Mrs. Corfield's previous conduct.

I also discovered that Mrs. Bodenham was much relieved at her late guest's departure, even her hospitable soul having at last been wearied by the exacting selfishness which Mrs. Corfield's sweet manners could not permanently disguise. Bodenham himself was disposed to stand up for her at first; but when he found she had left Bombay deeply in debt, and was pestered with applications for her address, and her bills fell like a shower on the house on Malabar Hill, he turned against her more bitterly than his wife had done.

When my leave was up, I rejoined my regiment in no very cheerful frame of mind: indeed, so great was my disgust with the world that I felt no regret at leaving it, and surprised my comrades by my stoicism when, some months later, I was appointed to command the detachment of our regiment which was sent to occupy the Rock of Kazim.

No drearier spot, I imagine, is anywhere occupied by her Majesty's forces—a burnt-up rock, incapable of growing a blade of corn, and perfectly useless to any one. We only occupy it to prevent another nation from taking it, not from any dog-in-the-manger feeling, but because the rock commands our road to India. There is no population on this tiny island, and I found myself the only European in the place. Happily for me, my second in command, a native officer of the name of Ram Singh, was an intelligent man, and he and I were very good friends. My time was pretty well occupied in caring for the little force under my command, and there were my home letters to prevent me from feeling quite out of the world.

No ships touch at Kazim, but we used to signal to the steamers as they passed to and fro, and send out a boat to meet them when they had anything for us.

It happened, however, that for some weeks after my arrival at Kazim my letters remained unforwarded, and several mails passed without my getting any home news. At the end of that time an accumulation was sent on to me, with a polite letter of apology for the mistake which had been made.

I got the letters in the morning, and at once sat down to read them. I had already heard that Aunt Lavinia was better, and was puzzled to find a reference in my mother's letter—the first one I opened—to "Jack's trouble."

I next turned to an incoherent little note from Ellie.

"Wasn't it dreadful?" she asked. "She should never be happy again; and papa was so angry, and she didn't know what to do."

I was getting impatient, when I saw Jack's well-known hand, and knew I should find out what was the matter at last.

My impatience changed to consternation when I discovered the truth. Mrs. Corfield had declared that Jack had made her an offer of marriage just before she set sail from Bombay, and on his denying it, had immediately put the matter in a lawyer's hands, and was about to bring an action for breach of promise against

Jack. My father was furious, and inclined to believe that Jack must at least have trifled with Mrs. Corfield. Her case had been taken up by a highly respectable firm of lawyers, who would certainly not have acted for her unless she had evidence to produce, though what it could be Jack was at a loss to conceive.

"She claims to have letters from me," he wrote, "though, as you know, I never sent her a line in my life. I cannot imagine why she should persecute me."

I remembered Mrs. Corfield's debts, and that the owner of Dallow Court might be expected to pay heavy damages if the case went against him; and then it suddenly flashed across my mind that the letters Mrs. Corfield relied upon were those that I had written to her.

I habitually signed myself J. Dallow, and my handwriting and Jack's were almost identical. If Mrs. Corfield swore the letters were from Jack, he could hardly disprove it, unless I were there to claim them. I foresaw a miscarriage of justice, Jack's good name dishonored, and Ellie's future blighted, and here was I, stuck upon this hateful rock, utterly powerless to stop the mischief, which nothing but my presence in England could avert.

There was no time to apply for leave. Mrs. Corfield's case would be heard in less than a month's time; I should barely reach home soon enough to be of use, if I took the very next steamer which passed the rock.

This idea gave a fresh turn to my thoughts; this was the day on which the P. & O. steamer generally passed us, homeward bound.

I stepped out of my hut, which was only a few paces from the water's edge. Ram Singh was standing on the shore, a telescope to his eye.

"The smoke of the P. & O. steamer is just visible," he said.

I did not speak for a minute.

Before me I saw two duties: my duty to my friend and my duty to my country.

One said to me "Go"; the other said "Stay." I knew that in absenting myself without leave, I was laying

myself open to the charge of desertion, and all that it implied of ruin and disgrace.

If I remained at my post, nobody would blame me, and Jack would be the last person to find fault with me.

But my friend was in danger, and my country was not. It was a time of profound peace, Ram Singh was faithful and competent, and there was Jack at home, who wanted me.

My mind was made up, and there was no time to lose. I turned to Ram Singh.

"Signal to the steamer," I said, "and tell the men to get the boat ready at once. I have to go to England immediately, but I shall be back within the month, and I know that our flag is safe in your hands."

My journey home was not a pleasant one, for I was tormented with many fears.

Should I get home in time to be of use? Would the evidence I had to offer be as valuable as I had imagined?

Perhaps Jack could have got on very well without me, and there was no justification for my rash act.

But all my doubts vanished after my first meeting with Jack.

"I could never have sanctioned your running such a risk for me. I am not worth it, Jem!" he exclaimed, when he found out what I had done.

We met in London, where Jack happened to be staying for a time. I got his address from his lawyers, Messrs. Clarke & Adams, whom I visited immediately on my arrival.

By Jack's wish, Mr. Clarke saw her lawyers, and arranged for an interview between them and myself.

As I had guessed, the letters Mrs. Corfield relied upon were those I had written to her in Bombay; and I succeeded in convincing her lawyers of the fact.

Not only was there the similarity in the handwriting, but, though the letters were undated, I was able to prove that one of them at least had been written before Jack had set foot in the country, as it contained a reference to a certain charity bazaar, where Mrs. Corfield and I had met one another a week before Jack's arrival in Bombay. When I had pointed this out to the

lawyers, and we had verified it by a reference to the old numbers of the Indian papers, there was nothing more to be urged for their client, and they were anxious to withdraw from a case which could bring them neither profit nor reputation.

Mrs. Corfield was alarmed at finding herself discovered, and at hearing I was in London, instead of on the Rock of Kazim.

She consented to publish an apology to Jack, and also signed a statement, acknowledging that the letters she had attributed to Jack had been written by me.

This was sent to my father, who thereupon graciously forgave Jack for the misdeed he had not committed.

I did not venture to go home myself, as I could neither bring myself to keep the truth from my father, nor to face him so long as my breach of discipline was unpardoned.

Three days I spent with Jack in London, and then, my business being completed, I started off to Brindisi, and regained my rock in less than a month from the time I had left it.

Everything had gone smoothly in my absence, and Ram Singh expressed a hope that my journey had been profitable to me.

"Yes," I replied; "I have helped my friend, and overcome my enemy."

There was a gleam of sympathy in Ram Singh's dark eyes; he came of a race where the maintenance of the blood feud is the most sacred of duties.

"You may count upon my silence," he said.

I knew he spoke the truth, but now that I had done what I could for Jack, there was that other duty to think about.

"Thank you, Ram Singh," I said. "I would trust you as a brother, but I am going to-night to write a full report of my journey to Colonel Hanbury."

The next steamer which passed the rock carried my letter to my colonel, and I spent an uncomfortable time while expecting his reply.

Week after week passed, and when at last there came a letter in Colonel Hanbury's well-known hand, it was

addressed to Ram Singh. My heart sank when I saw it, as I guessed I was to be superseded.

It was hard to gather anything from Ram Singh's impassive face, but when he had read it, he put the letter in my hand.

It was a friendly note from Colonel Hanbury, expressing his satisfaction at hearing of the efficient manner in which Ram Singh had discharged his duties at Kazim during Mr. Dallow's recent visit to England.

There was not a word for me either then or later on, when my detachment was recalled in due time, and we rejoined our regiment.

Once I tried to approach the subject with Colonel Hanbury, but he promptly silenced me.

"King Solomon tells us that there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. You spoke at the right time. Don't spoil it by talking at the wrong."

I was silent for many years. Colonel Hanbury had long since retired, and was a white-haired old gentleman, living at Bath, and I was a colonel myself, with scars and medals, when I went down to see him.

"That was a close shave for you that time at Kazim," he said, as we were talking over old days.

"I have never understood why my conduct was overlooked," I replied.

"I mentioned it to the chief, and we talked it over, he, and Cardale, and I. We agreed there could be no middle course. If your conduct were noticed, you would have to be dismissed the service, *pour encourager les autres*, as Voltaire said. Cardale thought you would have to go, but the chief said:

"'We can't afford to lose a lad who is too loyal either to desert his friend or deceive his superiors. Our Indian Empire is the work of men who were not afraid of responsibility, and I don't mean to lose sight of a young fellow who, in a sudden emergency, chose the generous, self-risking course, instead of intrenching himself behind rules and regulations. Let our young friend hold his tongue, and we will keep our own counsel."

"I am sure you put in a good word for me," I said to the old man, who had always been kind to me.

"I did what I could. I told them you were the most promising young fellow in the regiment, and so popular with the men that, if you had chosen, Ram Singh and the rest of them would never have said a word. I pointed out that, if you were dismissed, it would be in consequence of your frankness, and that it would be hard for you to suffer where a less honorable man would have escaped. All the same, you didn't deserve to escape scot free as you did."

"Scot free!" I exclaimed. "I don't think you quite realize what I went through. I was tortured with doubt as to whether I had not done a disgraceful act; I didn't dare to face my father, or even venture home for one look at my mother; and when I had got back to Kazim, and you sent that letter to Ram Singh, instead of to me, I made quite sure I was to be dismissed the service."

"Ah! I thought I should give you a fright that time," chuckled the old colonel; "but you know it served you right."

Here is a vivid picture of a spy's life during the Civil War. The mystery and peril surrounding the career of the spy are well adapted to fire the imagination of the story-writer; and even a literal account of the adventures of some of these bold men is enough in itself to hold the reader spell-bound. Such an account is the following, written for ROMANCE by Clarence F. Cobb.

CAUGHT IN THE ENEMY'S LINES.

HE was a man of about five feet eight or nine, stout but not fat, sandy-haired, gray-eyed, slightly bow-legged, and about five-and-fifty years old; and he told me the following out at the Soldier's Home the other day:

"Where did you lose your arm, Sergeant?"

"Down in the Wilderness."

"I'm sorry."

"I ain't."

"And why, Sergeant?"

"Because after I fell out of the ranks our regiment got into a cross-fire of canister and was slathered pretty bad. Now, if I hadn't lost my arm just before that, I might have lost my life, don't you see?"

"That's one view to take of it, to be sure."

"Certain it is. I had a closer call than that, though, down to Fredericksburg."

"Tell me about it."

"I've told it so often that it's a bore to my chums about here, and may be you won't believe it, Pard, but you may bet your boots, it's true. I was in the old First Corps, under Joe Hooker, up in Maryland, when we fought the battle of Antietam. We went in, one corps at a time, and old Bull Sumner wouldn't let Franklin go in and finish the thing, and General Lee was just smart enough to git away. I remember just as well as yesterday, when we crossed the Antietam the night before the big fight and bounced Hood's division. Those Johnnies were good troops, Pard. They were just lightning on a flank, and just as good on a

defense. The war's over now, Pard, and the truth's the truth; I'm willin' to own they were game as steel every time. Why, they'd hug the ground so close you couldn't see 'em, and they'd crawl up on their bellies and pick off the artillerymen, and half the time you couldn't see a thing. Artillery ain't worth anything anyhow, if it hasn't got some infantry support. I've seen two or three Johnnies cripple a whole battery and the battery couldn't help it, because a man lying down on the ground is too little for guns to fight. Some of the books talk about the Antietam being a river; it's only a creek-like, not as wide as a street. You may believe it or not, Pard, but there was one big writer got the Johnnies on the wrong side of the Antietam! I've read it myself.

"Up there I was a scout for Old Joe, and when we had the fight with Hood's division towards night of September 16, I was detailed with a lot of other fellows to take the prisoners to the rear. There was a soldier in our company named Shamer. He was a good one, but he'd get drunk every pay-day, and when he was drunk, he was the ugliest man you ever saw; he'd ram a bayonet into his best friend quicker'n a wink. Why, he took a prisoner down on the Peninsula once, and the poor fellow gave him some sass when he was taking him to the rear, and Shamer up with the butt of his piece and killed him; he didn't know what he was doing.

"Well, when we were taking the prisoners back, Shamer was along, and I saw he was about half-seas-over and mighty ugly; and I kept my eye on one of these fine-drawn fellows, a prisoner, with a face like a girl and little hands and feet. He carried himself like a turkey-cock. Shamer said something ugly to him, and he snapped back something ugly to Shamer. Quicker'n lightning Shamer flung up his piece and pulled the trigger, but I threw up my piece against Shamer's and the charge went over the prisoner's head. Then he made for the prisoner with his bayonet, but I parried it and said:

"'Drop that piece; drop it, or I'll shoot you! You want to kill a prisoner, you ——!'

"He was mad enough and he made for me with his bayonet, but he was so tipsy he couldn't handle himself right. I parried, and the lunge turned him around, and I chucked him under the left shoulder and put my bayonet plumb through him. I guess I must have touched him somewhere about the heart, because he dropped like a shot. Then he gave a shiver-like, and I knew he was gone for good.

"The Captain of the guard saw the whole thing, and says he: 'Sergeant, keep your head shut about this, but you did exactly right.'

"Of course, I felt pretty bad about it. The prisoner wrung my hand and thanked me so much that I felt as though I had known him for years. When we got back to the creek, we turned the prisoners over to another guard, and then we went back on the lines and the fighting was over, because it was dark. An orderly came for me and said General Hooker wanted to see me, and I asked him where he was, and he told me to keep with him. So I followed behind his horse to Miller's barn, and the old man was there with his staff. He was pretty well set up, but he gave me a big slug of commissary and some hardtack and some sardines out of a tin and a big tin cup of hot coffee which his cook had made over a spirit-lamp, and he asked me if I couldn't find a Johnny's uniform back there somewheres where we had been fighting before dark. I told him I could. 'Well,' he says, 'I wish you would, Sergeant.' So I went back to the woods, and pretty soon I came back to the General in a Confederate uniform. One of his staff held up a candle, and the old man looked me over and says he: 'Now, Sergeant, you look like a reb sure enough. I wish you to cross these fields into the rebel lines and find out all you can, and report to me right here by four o'clock to-morrow morning. See if they have any intrenchments or are throwing any up, and if they have many guns, and if Jackson is here or down on their right, and find where Longstreet is, and let me know if there's any stone walls or stiff fences over there on the turnpike, and pick up all the information you can. You want a watch?' I told him yes, and a lieu-

tenant on his staff gave me his watch to take along. 'Now, whatever you do, don't fail to be here at four o'clock at the outside. Do you understand?'

"I saluted the General and he gave me another slug, and I slipped right across into the Johnnies' lines. I nosed around all night, and got back to the General on time and told him how everything was over there. He was mighty thankful, and told me I must be tired and to lie down and get some rest. So I went across the Antietam, to General McClellan's headquarters at Pry's house, and crept under some bushes in the garden. I slept all day, and didn't know a thing about the big fight till night.

"After we fought that battle we lay around there for five or six weeks. Then we crossed the Potomac, and marched into Virginia, down to Fredericksburg. Burnside was in command, and Old Joe sent for me one day to report down at Sumner's headquarters at the Phillipps house. I went down there, and General Burnside was there himself. He asked me if I could make a map, and I told him no. He said he wanted me to go into the rebel lines and make a map and bring it to him. Well, thinks I, if you're believing I'm going into the Johnnies' lines to make any map, you're the worst mistaken man that ever was. I'd go over there quick enough, but I don't want any map about my clothes.

"General Burnside says then: 'Sergeant, can't you get into their lines?' I told him certainly I could. 'Well,' he says, 'you surely could make a crude map of some kind and bring it over.' I says: 'What's a crude map, General?' He says: 'Oh, any kind of a rough sketch.' I says: 'No, General; I can hardly write.' General Hooker says: 'I think, General, he could learn the lay of the land very well and bring you that information, and that's about what you want.' General Burnside says to Old Joe: 'Certainly, General; that's what I'm driving at.' Well, thinks I, why didn't you say so? 'What I want, Sergeant,' says Burnside, 'is this: I wish to ascertain if they have a road made from right to left back of the heights.' I says: 'I can find that out all right, General, and be back in five or six

days.' He says, 'Then I'll be satisfied. You see my plan is this: I propose to throw Sumner's grand division over on their left and Franklin's on their right, and get possession of that road if there's one there, and divide their army, then I propose to——' and I'll be beat if he wasn't going to give his plan away to me, and me a spy! But Old Joe turned red in the face and whispered in his ear and stopped him.

"That night I got our countersign and went down to our picket on the river up by Beck's Island and waited for a deserter to come over. One came along about the second relief and I told the Captain of the picket that I wanted that man, and I snapped the bracelets on him and took him away back to a guard-tent where the fellows had a fire and I says to him: 'What's your countersign?' He says: 'Orange.'

"I grabbed a muskit from the stack and made for him as though I was going to murder him and yells: 'You —— liar! You come any such game as that here, and I'll put a bayonet through you! Orange, you fool! There's been five of you over to-night, and you all give a different countersign.'

"He dropped on his knees and begged, and said those men must have lied, that the countersign was Orange, so I saw I was all right on that, and I got out of my clothes and made him get out of his and we swopped, and I went back to the river, and crossed in a skiff and ran right plumb into a rebel picket.

"'Who goes there?'

"'Oh, simmer, will you?' I says to the picket. 'You better not throw that piece up so careless. You'll bore a hole in a friend before you know it.'

"'Got the countersign?'

"'Well, if I hadn't, I wouldn't have any business around here, but I ain't going to give it to *you*. You call the sergeant of the guard, will you?'

"'No, I'm d—d if I do.'

"'Then I'll ram you in the guard-house.'

"'You will!'

"'If I don't, I'm a liar! I tell you to call the sergeant quick; do you hear!'

"And he called the Sergeant, and when he came, I says to him: 'Sarge, where does this man come from? It's mighty hard to run the risk of being hung by the Yanks when we are in their lines, but to have a green soldier like this on post, ready to chuck a minie into us when we come into our lines to report, ain't a fair shake. When a fight's over, you can take it easy, but fight or no fight, our work's never done. You uns can hang around the towns and see the girls, and when you come up from the James, the most of you didn't have to march but you rode in the cars—but I ain't a-growling. I want you to put a guard over my skiff, because I want to go over into the Yanks' lines again in three or four days as soon as I get my orders from General Longstreet.' And I gave him the countersign and I passed right along into Fredericksburg.

"Well, I nosed around Fredericksburg and the Heights, clean away down to Hamilton's Crossing, and saw just where their batteries were and how everything was. It was mighty well fortified, and I staid around there three or four days. Back of the Heights, one clear day, the rebel officers had a horse-race and I was then with a crowd of Johnnies looking on, and a kicking little chestnut mare beat everything and flung her rider. There was a young fellow there, as fine as silk, a lieutenant on Longstreet's staff, who said there wasn't a man in the Confederacy who could ride that mare. I saluted him and says: 'Lieutenant, I can ride her.' He says: 'You can?' And I says: 'Yes, sir.' And he says: 'Where'd you learn to ride?' And I says: 'I rode races when I was a boy in York State.' He turned around mighty quick and says: 'Where?' And I began to shake and says: 'In Texas.' 'Oh,' he says, 'but just now you said New York. Where do you belong?' 'To the 4th Texas, Lieutenant.' 'Who's your Colonel?' And I was caught, Pard, I couldn't tell him; and he hauls my jacket off, and finds one of Uncle Sam's shirts on me and U. S. on my shoes, and they puts me under guard and tries me on a drum-head and I was sentenced to be hung.

"They were mighty kind to me and gave me a fair

shake, but they knew I was a spy and they asked me if I wanted a Chaplain, and I said I did, and he came to see me. I'm d—d if he wasn't one of the best men I ever saw. He prayed for me harder'n I could pray for myself and hoped I'd die repentant, and I told him that he could just bet his pile that I'd die game and I'd try to meet him on the picket-line in Heaven if he'd get 'em to shoot me. I didn't want to be hung.

"I don't know why, Pard, but they gave me three days after I was sentenced, but they rolled around mighty quick and it got to be the night before. I was kept under guard in a little log-house that there wasn't a sign of a chance to get out of. It hadn't any window and only one door, and I was ironed and the door was kept shut and a guard was on post in front of it.

"I had the funniest dream that night, Pard. I dreamt I died and went to Heaven, and Saint Peter was standing at the gate in the full uniform of a Major General and he was smoking a corn-cob pipe, and I marched up and saluted the old man, and he took his pipe out of his mouth and says: 'Where do you belong?' And I told him I belonged to the First Corps, and he says: 'Did you ever straggle?' 'No, sir,' I says, 'I ain't a straggler.' 'Did you ever flunk?' 'No, sirree; there's no flunk about me.' 'Did you ever steal any chickens?' 'Certainly I have,' I says, 'many a time.' 'Did you ever get drunk on pay-day?' 'Certainly I have, but never when I was on duty.' 'Did you ever play bluff?' 'Yes, sir,' I says. 'Did you ever take a French?' 'Not when I was on guard.' 'Well,' he says, 'you are a good soldier and may go in, I guess,' and he gave me the countersign, Pard, which was *Faith*, and I heard a noise and turned around, and the Devil was standing there and he bows to St. Peter and says: 'Good morning, St. Peter.' 'Good morning,' says St. Peter. 'You're looking very grimy and sooty this morning. Why in time don't you bathe yourself?' 'That's all right, St. Peter,' says the Devil, 'but that's my man.' 'Ah,' says St. Peter, 'why?' 'Because he was a spy and he was a hard swearer.' And St. Peter says to me: 'Is that so?' 'Yes,' I says, 'that's so.' 'Yes,' says the Devil, 'and

he ran off into the army and broke his mother's heart.' 'As for that,' says St. Peter, 'they all did that, and as for him being a spy, somebody had to do that too, and as for him being a hard swearer, that don't count against soldiers and those that have the gout. I tell you, my black friend, if I'd give you all the old soldiers who swear, you'd be dreadfully crowded down there, and they'd give you a lively shake some of these days. This man belongs here.' And I passed in, Pard, and leaned over the golden breastworks and shook my fist at the black scamp, just so, and says: 'Yes, you ——, if I had my piece here, I'd put a ball through you. You're a-laying low to ketch a lot of us old soldiers, and you think you're —— smart; but I believe the General-in-Chief up here will help all the poor fellows who had a hard time in the war down yonder, and He don't care which side they fought on so they did their duty, and don't you forget it.'

"And St. Peter smiled and says to the Devil: 'Swearing is very wrong, to be sure, but I'd rather hear a man swear when he means no harm than hear him pray when he means no good.'

"And I says—but just then I woke up as the third relief came on and another guard relieved the one at the cabin door. He was a good fellow and lent me his pipe to smoke, and the Sergeant of the Guard came around and asked him if he had any water in his canteen and he told the Sergeant that his canteen was full a few minutes before he left the guard-house, but some one there had pulled the cork and let all the water run out of it.

"Well," says the Sergeant, "mine is empty too. I wish you'd go down to the branch and fill both of them; I'll stand ward for you."

And he took the canteens and went away, and the Sergeant opened the door and says:

"'Yank!'

"'What?' I says.

"He says: 'Light out! Keep right up this road to the fence corner where the two big trees are, and stay there till I come.'

"'No, you don't, Sergeant,' says I. 'If you want to get credit for putting a hole through me, I ain't willing.'

"'For God's sake, Yank, git away from here! Don't you know me?'

"'No.'

"'So much the better, but I want to get you out of this. Light out, I tell you!'

"'That's all right, Sergeant, but how can I? I'm ironed.'

"'Sure enough,' he says, coming into the cabin and slewing his cartridge-box around. 'Here's the key.'

"And he unlocked my irons, and I got out of them in a hurry, I tell you.

"'Stay there under the trees till I come."

"'All right,' says I, 'and God bless you.'

"And, Pard, I staid there in the moonlight till he came, and he says: 'Swear to me that, if I give you our countersign, you'll only use it to get over the river.'

"'If I do, Sarge,' I says, 'I'm d—d.'

"'That's all right. The countersign is *Rapp.*'

"And I shook hands with him and I was too smart to go sneaking 'round when I had the pass-word; I just marched plumb through three or four lines and gave the word, and when I got to the river, my skiff was there all right and the same guard was there.

"'Halt!'

"'Oh, I'm halting, ain't I? Call the Sergeant and be quick.'

"'Got the countersign?'

"'Never you mind about the countersign—call the Sergeant.'

"'And he did, and when he came, I says: 'Have you kept my skiff all right?'

"'Yes, it's all right.'

"And I takes him to one side and whispers to him: "'Sarge, when you come off guard in the morning, I want you to go to General Longstreet and tell him I crossed here. He gave me my orders to cross down at Massaponax, but I want you to see him himself—don't you tell any of his staff—and say I crossed right here,

because the Yanks were too thick on the other bank down there, and I wasn't sure I got their countersign right. Now, don't you forget it.'

"'That's all right,' says the Sergeant, 'but you haven't given me the countersign yet.'

"'Sure enough. The countersign is *Rapp.*'

"He said that was all right, and I got over safe enough, Pard, but it was a close call.

"Well, last Fall I was standing in the road here looking at the people riding by, and an open carriage came along and a good-looking man was in it, with a handsome woman and a little boy, and he looked at me mighty hard, but he never said anything. He drove past, and then he turned round and drove back again, and speaks to me.

"'Comrade,' he says, 'what's your name?'

"I bows to him and says: 'My name is Burke.'

"'Burke'? he says. "Was it always Burke?"

"I says: 'Certainly; I never had any alyeas.'

"'Never had any what?' he says with a smile.

"'No alyeas,' I says.

"'Oh,' he says, 'I didn't suppose you ever had an alias. I must have been mistaken, and I beg your pardon.'

"'That's all right,' I says, and he drove away again, but I'm d—d if he didn't turn round and drive back again, and he says: 'You really must excuse me, but were you not tried during the war under the name of Falls?'

"'I believe I was,' I says, 'but that wasn't my right name.'

"'No,' he says, all of a quiver, 'I know that, I know that well enough, but were you not sentenced to be—to be—to be——'

"'Hung?'

"'Yes, hung, down at Fredericksburg, thirty years ago, and you escaped and——'

"'That was me.'

"'I knew it! Oh, I knew it!'

"And, Pard, he jumps out of his carriage and hugs

me, and then he turns around and tells his wife a lot of stuff in such a hurry that I didn't understand a word of it, and she gets out of the carriage all in a flutter and begins to cry and she kisses me on the cheek and says her little boy was named Falls after me.

"Well, thinks I, here a mess; these people must be crazy, but I didn't object to having a pretty woman kissing me, so I reached over just so and I kissed her five or six times, and then I says to him:

"'How did you know about it?'

"'Why, Burke, old fellow, God bless you, it was I who let you escape.'

"And, Pard, I was so dumb-foundered that I lit my pipe and began to smoke. If a shell had burst right there and blown me up, I couldn't have been more astounded.

"'Lord, Lord,' I says, 'is that so? And do you know I've often wondered why you did it?'

"'Why? Man alive, didn't you risk your life to save mine the night before the battle of Antietam?'

And then I saw through the whole business, and every now and then they send me out some smoking-tobacco and lots of other good things. The other Sunday I went over and heard Dr. Buck preach a sermon on bread being cast on the waters and its coming back all right, and I says to the old man after church that I know mighty well that that's so every time."

Life on a canal boat would not seem, at first blush, to afford much material for the romancer. Julia Ditto Young, however, in this singularly effective tale, has used the homely canal-life setting in a way not only to give picturesqueness to her story, but to afford much interesting information regarding these useful "scavengers of travel."

THE WANDERING WILLIE.

LATE in the afternoon of a golden September day a canal boat was traversing the Erie canal at the sluggish rate of progress peculiar to that manner of navigation. Perhaps its locomotion was unusually slow, for not only was the boat eastward bound, and therefore heavily laden with the lumber it had shipped at Buffalo, but it was of a decidedly grave and sedate aspect generally, and was so extremely large, stolid, and clumsy that most of its compeers were as fairy shallops beside it for grace and lightness. It was old,—that is, old for a canal boat, which carries grain five years, lumber five years more, and then is past its usefulness,—the paint was worn and blistered, and the gilt letters on the stern were so defaced by time that one could with difficulty decipher the words:

"THE WANDERING WILLIE."

Had any one read this inscription on that September day, he would have thought it a most absurd misnomer. "Willie" was unsuitably light and tender; while the epithet "wandering" was surely ill applied to a vessel whose migrations were strictly confined to the long and narrow extent of a canal. But perhaps it had seemed a more fitting title some fifty years ago, when it had been chosen for a somewhat less ponderous craft than the present possessor of the name; when, too, the Erie canal was a new, vast, and magnificent enterprise, and a voyage along its placid waters seemed almost as memorable as a trip to Europe does to us now.

No one, however, bestowed any scrutiny upon the

stern of the old boat that afternoon, for it was passing through a district very thinly settled. Now and then a distant farmhouse with its red-roofed barns gave a touch of human interest to the landscape, and occasionally the boat crept slowly along between wide stubble fields lying warm and glowing under the late sun, as if full of a pleasant consciousness of a summer's work well done. But most of the time the canal lay through vast woods, so dense that oak and elm, beech and maple leaves mingled together in undistinguishable confusion. The boat in these leafy solitudes was as isolated as a ship at sea; but its loneliness was not desolate, for it was broken by the twitter of many birds, and by the sense of the intense life in the myriad growing trees and vines.

There were five persons connected with the boat. One man was lazily guiding the mules some two hundred feet ahead; another was dozing in the bow of the boat; Jenny, a young woman, was preparing supper on the forward part of the deck; a young man was holding the tiller; and near him sat an elderly woman knitting. These latter two saw in their different ways much of the beauty and poetic possibilities of the scene; the young man thought that, "far in forest-deeps unseen," such as these, Lancelot and Guinevere had ridden side by side, and in just such bosky dells Orlando and Rosalind did "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world." The woman, unfamiliar with the careers of these distinguished personages, merely put down her coarse knitting to listen more intently to a blackbird's piping, or to inhale with undefined delight the cool fresh odors of the ferns and mosses, or the warm breath of the fields.

Presently she broke a long silence by saying to her companion,

"You haven't told me 'bout that there letter you got yist'day."

"I've been wanting to, but I hardly knew how to begin," said the young man, with an effort to speak lightly. "It's from that banking firm in Chicago I told you about; they offer me a good position now, and a

chance to rise. I must make up my mind to-night. It would be a great thing for me, mother."

Until he spoke the last word one would never have suspected the relation between them. The young man looked like a gentleman; the straw hat pushed back on his head revealed a face at once keen, thoughtful, and refined; his suit of blue flannel fitted him well and was scrupulously neat. The woman wore a calico dress and apron, and a gingham sunbonnet. She was not much past middle life, but seemed rather older; severe and incessant labor had bent her frame, as it had hardened and misshapen her hands. But with that word mother as a key, an observer could have traced the latent resemblance in the two faces. There were the same soft brown eyes and wide brows, surmounted in one case by thick, curly brown locks, in the other by scanty gray ones. There were the same square jaws and firm, set lips, that told of indomitable energies; and each countenance as it turned toward the other beamed with tender affection.

"Make up yer mind, Joe?" the woman said slowly, evidently startled. "You don't mean that you air reely thinkin' of it?"

"Mother!" he said with a passionate earnestness he strove in vain to conceal, "you must see for yourself that I am not fitted for the life on a canal boat. It is too quiet, too dull—it has no opportunities. I have seen and learned too much to settle down willingly to this work. If I am to do nothing else than this in the world, it was a mistake for you and father to send me to school and college."

"Don't say that, Joe!" cried his mother in quick reproach. "Yer father an' yer gran'father often felt 'shamed o' havin' no eddication; they allus earned a fair livin', to be sure, and had everybody's good word. But it's a fine thing to have schoolin', an' we was bound you should have it. An' we worked fur it," she concluded, simply, but with a retrospective sigh.

"I know you did," said Joe, gratefully. "And I know how you worked,—like slaves, like tigers! I only meant that it would be a mistake for me not to get the

best results from your work and father's and my own. Out in the world, mother,—Oh, there's so much to see and to do, so much money to be earned, so many bright, pleasant people to know!"

A little silence succeeded. Joe hoped that his mother was amplifying his arguments in her own mind, and presently he ventured to add:

"I thought, mother, you would enjoy living in Chicago, in a little house with a furnace, perhaps, and stained glass in the hall and curtains in the doorways."

She turned upon him with absolute terror in her eyes.

"Joe!" she cried in a voice of intense pain. "Surely you won't make me do that? Surely there's no law that'd help you to drag me away from here to a place like that?"

"Mother,—dear mother!" said Joe, soothingly. "I wouldn't for the world ask you to go if you did not wish to do so. I only wished to offer you a pretty home,—and you know you have never had a home."

"Never had a home?" she echoed, scornfully. "What do you call *The Wandering Willie*, then? There's no woman in America that's prouder of her home than I be. I know every mile of the three hundred an' more between Buffalo and Albany as well as most people do their own miz'able little weedy dooryards. I've come by these fields fur fifty year, an' seen 'em brown and bare in the spring, an' then a faint light green, an' then yaller as the sunshine, an' then bare again, like they be to-day; an' sometimes I've come by when the first snow has covered 'em all up warm for the winter. An' I know the very birds' nests in the trees, Joe; an' there ain't a town as we go through but what I've got good true friends in. How kin you say this ain't a home, Joe? It's been a place to love in, to work in, to live and die in. What more do you want?"

II.

"Forgive me, mother," said Joe, humbly. He dared not speak again, for fear of unwittingly giving her fresh pain. It was some time before she spoke.

"I've told you so often all about *The Wandering Willie*

that I don't s'pose you'd keer to hear it all over agin, would you, Joe?" she said, wistfully.

"Indeed, I should like to hear it," said Joe, with so much apparent interest that his mother was visibly flattered, and without urging plunged into a sea of retrospect.

"The very fust thing I kin remember is sittin' by my father on the deck of a boat like this, tied into my little cheer. My mother was dead, an' my father was all wrapped up in me. He was as good a man as ever lived, though rough in his ways. He did swear dreadfully sometimes, but then all canal men do mostly. But he was gentle as a kitten with me, an' would watch me in my little cheer an' tell me by the hour 'bout the places we was passin'. Sometimes he would talk o' sendin' me to school, but he couldn't bear to part with me an' I hated to go. Winters we lived in a tavern at Lockport, an' there I got a little schoolin', so I could read, write and cipher some, an' when I was only a slip of a gal, I und'stood all about freight an' managin' the boat better than you ever will, I'm afraid, Joe."

"I'm afraid so, too, mother."

"Now, Joe,—'bout the name o' this old boat,—you do think it's a pretty name, don't you?"

"I think it's the sweetest ship's name that ever was invented!" said Joe, with conviction. For he knew that not all the mythical ships of song and story had for him the significance of this one. *The Wandering Willie* would always represent to his mind the truest love, the tenderest fidelity.

"Well, your grandfather sot a great deal o' store by it. He called four boats by it, one arter another, and finally I give the name to this one. He'd got it out o' some play, or pome, or book,—he never rightly knew where himself,—an' it riled him to have any one make fun of it. One evening we was lyin' to at Buffalo. It was about seven o'clock, an' the dock was full o' people walkin' up an' down to git the lake breeze, fur it had been a very warm day. I was talkin' with some gals forward, and father was sittin' in the stern, smokin'. He had been drinkin' some, and was that ugly no one

dast speak to him but me. Presently we see a young man starin' at the name on the stern and kinder smilin' to himself. He was a strong, goodlookin' young feller, with laughin' blue eyes,—you never see such eyes nowadays, Joe! Pretty soon he speaks up to father, and says he, very perlite,

"'Could ye give me a job o' work, sir?'

"'I could if I wanted to,' says father with a snarl, 'but I ain't agoin' to give no one a job that pokes fun at my boat.'

"'Why, I wan't a pokin' fun at yer boat!' says the young man, very respectful. 'Only I see The Wandering Willie there on the stern, an' my name's Willie an' I'm a-wanderin' round lookin' fur a job, an' it seemed kinder cur'us.'

"Well, there's never no relyin' on what a drunken man will do,—I'm mighty glad you don't keer fur liquor, Joe. My father got hoppin' mad at them innercent words, an' began swearin' an' takin' on awful. The young feller jest turned round an' walked off sorter discouraged. Father kept shoutin' to him that, if he didn't come on board an' git polished off, he'd come on shore arter him; an' all of a sudden, while he was a-shakin' his fists an' a-stampin' his feet, he give a crazy lurch and went right over the stern into the water!"

The old woman's voice trembled with excitement as she recounted this one thrilling incident of her life.

"The canal's an awful place to fall into; it's not so deep, but it's very wide, an' even if you kin swim to the bank, there's nothin' to cling to. You never see a mule drown, did you, Joe? You wouldn't believe how quick it's over. There's a little runnin' an' shoutin', an' somethin' dark comes slowly up an' rolls over jest under the water, an' there's a kind o' gurglin' cry that turns you sick all over, an' you feel wild to help the poor critter. The somethin' dark comes slowly up once more an' sinks agin; a few big bubbles rise, an' it's all over; but the thought of it sticks in yer mind fur days.

"It was as quick as that with father. He was a good swimmer, but when he rose, his head struck agin the rudder an' he never took a stroke,—he jest sank like a

stun. Everybody screamed, an' yelled, an' called fur ropes an' boats; but none of all his old cronies standin' round dast wet their skins to help him. Would you believe it, Joe? that young feller he'd jest been abusin' so mean was the very one to save him. He run back, tore off his coat, an' dived right where father had gone under. He was out o' sight so long the men began to say he was drowned too; but arter awhile he come up coughin' an' chokin', but draggin' father by the shirt-collar jest as he'd grabbed him under the muddy water. They got 'em into a scow, an' laid father on the dock an' worked over him twenty minutes afore he come to. He was sick two weeks with the blow he had got; but whether he was out of his head or not, he kep' allus a-callin' for Willie,—'the chap what's named arter my boat,' he would say. So Willie helped me nurse him, an' when father was well, he worked with us the rest of the season. When I was a gal, Joe, I was called good-looking, though you wouldn't believe it now."

"Of course I believe it—you know I do, mother!" interrupted Joe with such fervor that the pleased unready color—is there anything in the world so dear and pitiful as an old woman's blush?—crept into her cheek.

"An' so Willie took a likin' to me, an' on our last trip that season, when we was a-lyin' to at Lockport, a minister that ran a little mission on the dock came down to the boat an' married us. Father would have us married on *The Wandering Willie.* I had a green merino dress—it's in the little trunk with your baby clothes, Joe,—an' the next day me an' Willie had our dagerrytypes taken together. It hangs over my bunk, yer know—it ain't bad of me, but it don't do jestice to Willie.

"The next year you come along, Joe, an' how proud we all was of you! I felt kinder sorry you didn't have big blue eyes like yer father's; but there! we can't have everythin'. It seemed as if the world had gone back twenty-five years when I see you a-sittin' by father tied into my little old cheer. Father never seemed to git rightly over his accident; he was more civil, an' didn't swear an' drink so much, an' sometime he'd look

at the foul water an' shudder, an' then look at Willie so grateful it'd bring tears to my eyes. One winter in the old tavern at Lockport, when he'd been ailin' fur a week or so, he says to me, 'My gal, you'll soon have two Willies to look arter—Willie yer husband an' Willie the boat!' I told him not to talk like that, but he jest turned over in bed an' didn't seem to hear me. He didn't speak nor stir when the doctor come, nor till the next morning, when he springs up in bed an' calls out loud an' sharp, 'Low bridge! Low bridge!' Them was the last words ever he spoke."

She paused to wipe her eyes on her apron.

"Well, I'm maken' a long story out of it, ain't I, dearie? but it seems every time I tell it as if it might be the last time. There ain't much more now. We worked on, year in, year out,—fur you, Joe. It was only two year ago last spring, though it seems like twenty, that Willie begun to fail. He had doctors an' medicines, but they didn't do no good; they said he was kind o' wore out with hard work. They said the fresh air would be the best thing fur him, so we staid on the boat all summer as usual, only he sat and rested while the men worked. We couldn't very well have spared the profits of even one trip, fur you were at college, you know, Joe. But he got worse an' worse, an' at last I made up my mind as soon as ever we got to Buffalo I would take him to the tavern and telegraph fur you.

III.

"One afternoon in August we was goin' into Buffalo, jest passin' along under the bluff, with the lake an' river on the other side, so broad an' blue you couldn't tell where the lake ends an' the river begins. Willie lay back in a big easy-chair under an awning, jest where we're sittin' now, an' I was holdin' the tiller,—I haint ever had the strength to do it sence, Joe; I've been all broke up lately. There had come an awful gray look on his face in the last mile or two that frightened me so I didn't dare ask him how he felt; but now an' agin he'd smile at me with his big blue eyes, that

was jest as pretty that day, Joe, as they was the fust evenin' I saw him. At last I says, as the cool strong wind off the lake blew over us, 'It's a nice breeze, ain't it, Willie?' An' he says, 'Yes, lass; but it's takin' my soul along with it.' An' I had only time to drop on my knees by him an' kiss him once before it was all over. An' ever sence, when we slip along by that bluff, I feel the same breeze that took his soul away with it."

Her tears ran unchecked for some minutes before she resumed.

"That's all, Joe—that's why I can't never leave the canal an' this old boat. I sometimes feel as if I cared more fur it than I do fur you. Of course 'taint so—I only jest feel so. The boat belongs to my whole life someway—but you're so young an' such a stranger from bein' away so much—but there! I kep' a-sayin' all these years it'd be all right when you was home fur good; we'd be jest the same as if you'd never gone away. Such store as your father sot by yer fust figgers an' writin', Joe! I don't know what he'd have said, nor your grandfather either, to see the French an' Latin an' Greek books in yer cabin now!"

And her brown eyes, so like Joe's own, smiled on him with innocent pride, only to cloud suddenly.

"But it would have shamed them, Joe, an' angered your grandfather most terrible, to think their work wan't good enough fur you to follow in. An' I'm a lonely old woman, Joe,—say that you'll stay an' keep me comp'ny. 'Twon't be fur very long."

"Mother," said Joe, very gently, "I want to do what is right by you and by myself. Give me an hour or so to decide. I don't want to be a bad son to such a good mother."

"You couldn't be bad if you tried, Joe," said his mother fondly. At that moment Jenny's young voice called, merrily, "Supper, supper!" and Joe, having aroused the sleeping man and relinquished the tiller to him, sat down with the two women and ate the plain, carelessly-served meal. Then the man on the tow-path came on board for rest and refreshment, surrendering to Joe the guidance of the mules.

He could have laughed at his situation, only that its grotesqueness was so inseparably mingled with pain and perplexity. He thought as he walked along, of the ill-matched team Ulysses drove, of Apollo's magnificent coursers, of the snowy Paphian doves that bore Venus through the blue ether; and the more of these classical steeds and drivers he recalled, the more incongruous and absurd his own position seemed. He felt that he was better fitted to teach mythology than to drive mules. And yet, it would break his mother's heart if he left her. She had said he would not need to stay long. He shrank from speculating on her death; but if she were to live ten years, for instance? What high hopes and aspirations might he not forget, what vile habits of thought and speech and manner might he not acquire, in ten years?

At nine o'clock he gave up the lines to one of the men, who walked and drove till twelve. Then, as their working force was not sufficient for an all-night journey, the men moved the boat on the heel-path side and put the mules into their quarters, there to rest till daybreak. The two lanterns fore and aft, which would serve to reveal the boat's presence to captains who pushed on throughout the night, were attended to, and the two men turned into their bunks. Jenny and her mistress had long since retired, and only Joe was left awake. He paced up and down the deck in the starlight, trying to come to a resolution. Should he go,—and kill his mother? Should he stay,—and kill his own pride and ambition and bright prospects? Finally all his learning seemed to resolve itself into the memory of Captain Lawrence's noble words: "Don't give up the ship!" And at last he said aloud, "I will not," and the long struggle was ended. The canal life, with its small, slow gains, its homely duties, would be his while his mother needed him.

He went straight to her bedside. She heard him and reached out a hand through the darkness to clasp his.

"Mother, I have decided,—I'll stay and help you!" he said, bending to kiss her withered cheek; to his sur-

prise it was wet with tears. "What! you're crying,—you haven't been awake all these hours?"

"I couldn't sleep, Joe, but I will now. Thank you, my boy. You'll never be sorry. Good-night, Joe."

"Good-night, mother," he said, tenderly, and then, tired out, he sought his bunk and fell soundly asleep.

An hour or two afterward he found himself sitting up in bed, tearing the clothing from his throat and gasping for breath. In a moment he discovered that the cabin was full of a dense smoke. Hurrying on some garments, he dashed out and saw that the whole after part of the boat was in flames, past all chance of saving. The lantern had exploded, and the ignited oil had scattered far and wide. He loudly called Jenny and the men, and, taking his mother in his strong young arms, carried her on shore. Then he went back for a quantity of bedding, folded it carefully round her, and put her gently down on the ground, her head against a tree. Jennie sprang ashore; Joe helped the two men to release the mules, quivering with terror; and in a few minutes men and mules were safely off the boat. Then Joe, though it was braving death to do it, rushed back through the blinding, stinging smoke into his mother's cabin, and brought out the old daguerreotype and the little chest full of relics. He carried them to where she sat motionless against the tree.

"Here they are, mother,—all the things you care for!" he cried.

"All but the boat itself, Joe—nobody kin save that, kin they?" She looked at him with helpless appeal.

"Nobody, mother," he said, sadly. Indeed, the poor craft was already from stem to stern one sheet of flame. *The Wandering Willie* would never wander more. "But we can build another," added Joe, hopefully.

She shook her head and made no answer. Anything like the tragic despair of her set face Joe had never seen.

"'Tain't asked of you to stay, Joe; but you'd made up your mind to, anyhow; you was willin'. I'm glad o' that."

So was Joe, so would he always be.

"The insurance, Joe—it's all right; it's all yours," she said, quietly.

A strange fear crept over him. He knelt by her, and rested her head on his shoulder, and covered her closer from the chill night air with a lover-like tenderness. The fields stretched wide and black around them; the solemn stars shone dimly above.

"Will it jest burn to the water's edge, Joe? Or will it sink?"

"I don't know, mother," said Joe, huskily. The tears were running down his cheeks; but her eyes were quite dry.

"I jest couldn't bear—to see it sink—clean out o' sight—furever—Joe!" she whispered.

A slight shiver ran over her; her head lay a little heavier on Joe's shoulder. He looked into her face: and saw that he was motherless.

The author of this astonishing story, James Franklin Fitts, declares it to be almost literally true, excepting as to names.

A GREAT AWAKENING.

If the reader can conceive what his emotions would be upon meeting face to face in a crowded street a man whose funeral he had attended seven years before, he will then be able to realize how I felt when I came suddenly upon Milton Ross in a far western city.

I stopped abruptly, rooted to the pavement, as it were, with the shock.

"Why, Milton!" I cried, holding forth my hand.

There was not a sign of recognition in his face; indeed there was that very faint curl of the lip, hardly a sneer, which is often seen when a person is saluted by mistake. But it was impossible that I could make any mistake about *this* man. Years before, I had met him almost daily in our eastern home, had frequently transacted business with him—knew him, as the saying goes, as well as though he had been my brother. And what if I had attended his funeral, seven years before? Here he stood, in his own person, the same as when I last saw him in life, bearing not a trace of age nor change.

"You surely know me, Milton," I said. "I am John Tanner."

This time there was a very decided sneer, and it was in his speech.

"I don't doubt that your acquaintance is a very desirable one, Mr. Tanner, to those who are honored with it; but I have the misfortune not to be of the number. Please stand aside, sir."

I obeyed, in dumb amazement, and he walked on. Every word and motion gave me increased assurance that here was no mistake. Not only was the voice that of Milton Ross, but the manner and substance of his speech had that half-sarcastic dash for which he had

been noted. I watched him as he strode off through the crowd; and there was his peculiar gait, that I could have sworn to anywhere; a weakness in the right hip causing the step of that foot to be shorter than the step of the left.

My business in this town was finished, and I was on my way to the railroad station when this meeting occurred. My resolution was at once taken to wait for another train. Nature had given me an investigating disposition: I was not the person to see dead men walking about, without calling them to account for the eccentricity of the proceeding. So I followed my quondam friend down the street, keeping him easily in sight. Once I stopped a gentleman who had the air of being a resident of the place, begged his pardon, and, indicating the object of my pursuit, asked him if he could tell me that man's name. He could, certainly—that was Stanley Robbins, the merchant.

"Lives here?"

"Oh yes."

"How long?"

My informant reflected an instant, and said the time was rather more than six years.

I continued the pursuit. It led me into a large dry-goods establishment, over the handsome front of which was displayed in great gilt letters the name of Robbins. Walking straight back to the office, I found the proprietor alone. His fair forehead contracted into a frown as he saw me; and then he did a thing which seemed to me very significant. He closed the office door.

"Sir, you are laboring under a very curious delusion," he said.

"Sir, I am not! You were long a resident of S——, in the State of ——. You were buried there seven years ago. How you got out of your grave, and got so much life into you, I don't know, and I have the curiosity to find out. How was it?"

The man certainly had amazing self-possession. I had adopted a tone and manner of cool assurance, hoping to throw him off his guard: but he overmatched

me. His face wore an easy smile, a combination of amusement and irritation, and he replied promptly to my accusation:

"My dear sir, please remember that I am a business man, and have not the time for any sensational nonsense. You look like a person in possession of his senses, and I am willing to believe that it is only your zeal that has led you into annoying me about an accidental resemblance. If you have no other business here, I must wish you good morning."

How provokingly cool he was, to be sure! But I was not to be thrown off the scent by any such device. I put my card down on the desk before him.

"Mr. Ross," I said, "there is my name; it is well enough known to you without the card. I shall leave this town by the five o'clock train; in the mean time I shall be at the G—— House. You'd better call there and explain this resurrection to me."

He flipped away the card, and took down a ledger. My hand was on the door-knob when he swung his stool round and faced me.

"You don't—that is—you won't think it necessary to telegraph or write to S—— before I see you again?"

Confession spoke in the words!

"Milton," I said, "this masquerading has gone far enough with us. You see I can't be deceived. Speak out now, like a man, and explain yourself."

I saw a rapid change in his face as he opened the door himself, and called out:

"Mr. Perkins, I shall be particularly engaged for an hour. I must not be disturbed."

He led the way to his private office, locked the door and asked me to sit down. Then he stood before me, and said in a defiant voice that was plainly assumed:

"You are right, Mr. Tanner, I am Milton Ross. What then?"

"Nothing in particular; only it strikes me that perhaps you've missed your vocation. You seem to be doing a prosperous dry-goods business here; but from the manner in which you've faced me down for the

last half-hour I should say you would make a capital actor."

His cool bravado vanished in an instant; the strain had been too great, and his break-down was complete. He dropped helplessly into a chair and looked pitifully at me.

"For the last half-hour, John," he said, "I've been suffering the torments of the damned. You are the first person from S——, or anywhere east, who has come across me since I disappeared. I have been schooling myself for years to play the part that I have been trying to play on you, and you have seen my failure. John, you used to be my friend; now what will you do? Denounce me? Have me arrested? Give me up to the law?"

"Mr. Ross, this masquerading out of the grave, where you properly belong, is a mere matter of curiosity to me. I'm not aware that you've committed any crime—unless it is punishable for a dead man to pretend to be alive."

"For heaven's sake, John, don't jest with me now! What will my—Mrs. Ross say, if you betray me?"

I looked at him curiously.

"I should judge that you hadn't heard lately from S——."

"I have never heard from there; I did not dare to name the place or make an inquiry."

"Then you will be interested to know that she died three years ago."

The man jumped to his feet and paced the room like a crazy person, and actually shed tears of joy at the announcement.

"May she be happier in heaven than she ever was with me on earth!" he said, when his excitement had somewhat calmed. "Three years ago, do you say? It is not two years since I met here the only woman that I ever loved. The love and disappointment of twenty years ago came back too powerfully to be resisted. Rash as it was, wrong as I believed it, I married her. And now you tell me I had a perfect right to do so."

"So it appears. But you haven't told me yet, how you came to life."

"I'll do it. First, though, how did things, my affairs, go on at S——, after—after——"

"You mean after your death? Very properly indeed. Your funeral was a particularly fine one, very well attended, and your old pastor preached an excellent discourse. I think that on my return I'll have to look up some of the newspaper obituaries and send them to you; they would be interesting reading. As for your business affairs, you probably don't need to have me tell you that they were found in excellent shape. Your estate was valued at thirty thousand dollars, if I remember rightly, with but little debt. To tell the truth, your wife didn't seem to take your loss very much to heart; and——"

"I see," said Ross, with a broad smile. "She found consolation elsewhere."

"She married in barely a year after your funeral."

"Well—all right; but curiosity leads me to ask who the happy man was."

"You couldn't guess."

"Of course not."

"It was Squire Braden."

"What! That insignificant little whiffet! Well, what won't a woman do?"

The tension and stress under which Milton Ross had suffered were now gone, and he was able to join in the laugh that his last remark provoked. Then he proceeded to give me a brief account of the cause and manner of his disappearance from S——. With the disguise that is here given to the names of persons and places, the whole episode is committed to print as illustrating a phase of our social life which, if unpleasant to contemplate, is none the less an existing fact.

Milton Ross, as we knew him in S——, was a prosperous and popular man of business, and fortunate in all the relations of life. Years of wedlock had brought him no children, but it was never suspected that the pair did not enjoy an average share of marital felicity. The secret truth, decorously veiled from the world in

the skilful American fashion, was that these two, whom God was supposed to have joined together, bore the yoke of matrimony as an insupportable burden. A strange combination of circumstances presented to the husband the opportunity of releasing himself from his hateful bonds, at the price of the sacrifice of property, name, and life-long associations. He promptly seized it. Being in New York on a brief business visit, he had occasion to be absent from his hotel over-night. The paper of the next morning brought to him in Brooklyn an account of the destruction of this house by fire. Several guests had lost their lives; one of the bodies recovered had not been positively identified, and probably could not be, from its condition; but it was thought to be that of a Mr. Ross, of S——. For twenty-four hours thereafter that individual secluded himself and awaited events. The press of the next morning stated that the body had been sent to S——, as unquestionably that of its unfortunate citizen. Confident that he had left no clue in or about the metropolis by which the truth could be known, Ross accepted the fate assigned him, and became practically dead and buried to all his past life.

Neither my interest in this drama of real life, nor its own unities, would have been satisfied without my introduction to the present Mrs. Robbins, and I did not hesitate to accept Milton's invitation to dine with him. He took me to a beautiful home, and introduced me to a charming woman. I am pointing no morals nor drawing any lessons; yet truth compels me to say that here was positive wedded happiness, if the thing ever existed. But I wonder what the lady thought when I inadvertently called her husband Mr. Ross.

A more vivid series of pictures could scarcely be presented than those which follow each other in this mystical yet dramatic narrative by Karl Heigel. It has been translated from the German for ROMANCE by Alice May Elliot.

THE PERPETUAL LIGHT.

A MONASTERY has stood for centuries in a rocky nook on the shores of the Danube, not far from Regensburg. It is quite cut off from the world by the high cliffs which rise behind it, and the only road which leads to it is the river. The two wings of the monastery stretch from the cliff toward the river and are joined on the bank by the church. There is a brewery in one wing, and the other is the monastery proper, with cells for twenty monks. The proceeds of this brewery form the chief income of the poorly-endowed monastery, and the country people bring provisions in their market boats. At the time of our story, the place was occupied by twelve Benedictine monks, and their prior.

Easter came late that year, but it was an early spring; and one fine afternoon the air was as close and sultry as in summer. The sunshine lay upon the stones and grass-plots of the quadrangle, and was reflected from the weather-beaten cliffs and the white-washed walls of the corridors; it poured into the halls and cells, and even broke through the stained glass windows into the mysterious twilight of the church, where the perpetual light burned wan and pale before the high altar.

As there was no escape from the heat and glare above, two monks, Father Jerome and the Brother Cellarer, had taken refuge underground in the cool, dark cellar. A flickering lantern showed a wine jug on the table, and dimly lighted the damp, black walls.

"Here's to you, old comrade," said the priest. "Do you remember what jolly times we had together at the old village school?"

"Bless my soul! I should say I did," answered the other with a chuckle. "But I learned precious little, I warrant you! No great loss to me, I think now, when

I look at our Prior and Father Benedict. They used to be the best of friends, and now they are at daggers drawn. And the whole trouble is about the books in which Benedict has his nose the whole blessed day!"

Father Jerome shrugged his shoulders.

"Benedict is a dreamer," he said, "and it is poisoning youthful minds to allow him to go to the city as a professor, and it is a great wrong to allow him to preach on Sundays, simply because he is eloquent."

"Well, all I know is that he makes the monastery famous, and is good and kind," answered the Brother Cellarer, "and even Protestant professors have praised his last year's writings."

"*Per deum!*" cried Father Jerome as he struck the table with his clenched fist. "Of course the heretics praise him when he says that in many cases they are right! His last book belongs by rights on the Index as certainly as Voltaire and David Strauss! But wait a bit," he continued. "The prior is not going to stand this sort of thing much longer. By to-morrow at the latest something will happen—you may be sure of that!"

The peal of the gate-bell sounded through the stillness. Both monks sprang up, and stood by the gate before the porter crept out, grumbling and rubbing his eyes.

A handsome boy of some fifteen years came in, accompanied by a servant in livery.

"My name is Geldern, Count Felix Geldern," he said.

The three monks bowed low, as if by word of command.

"I have come to see my professor, Father Benedictus."

They went across the quadrangle to the library, and there they found a monk sitting reading at the great oaken table. He had a weak, insignificant figure; but a noble forehead, and large, clear eyes. He stretched out a friendly hand to the young count. It was Benedictus.

II.

In the dimly lighted refectory they sat and listened to the boy's prattle of plays and feasts—these thirteen men, clad in black, diverse in age and countenance, one

in renunciation. No one might speak but the prior and Father Benedict, whose guest the boy was; so they kept the required silence, and listened to the voice of the distant city. They saw beautiful figures in brilliantly lighted halls, and heard gay music, and the world's bright masquerade appeared to the old as a fairy-tale, and to the young as a dream.

The prior asked the boy questions from time to time, and watched Benedict narrowly.

After a while the young Count turned to his teacher and said: "How glad my mother will be to hear of this visit! She has been feeling ill this winter, and the only thing which seems to rouse her from her despondency is to talk of you. We sometimes spend hours talking of you and wondering when you will return."

The prior cast a surprised, black look at Father Benedict, but the latter's eyes met his so clearly and quietly that the Prior had to lower his own.

Soon it was time for Count Geldern to return. Benedict accompanied his pupil to the gate. Under the crucifix in the centre of the quadrangle they talked a long time of the boy's plans for the future; then he broke off childishly: "Your Father Prior seems to me more like a soldier than a monk. He is so tall, and has such a stern face."

"He would make a good soldier," said Benedict, smiling. "He is strong and bold."

There was a pause, and then Count Geldern took a dainty bookmark from his letter case.

"My mother sent you this," he said. "I was to ask you not to forget us, and to pray for us."

Benedictus took the little keepsake. He only said: "Be a good son, Felix." But his voice trembled with emotion.

"And when will you come back?" At this moment a flash of lightning illumined the whole heavens. Benedict stood there with a strange prophetic look on his face.

"I shall probably never go back," he said.

The great gate closed, and Benedictus returned to his cell with bowed head. Black figures glided like shad-

ows through the corridors, and last of all the Prior passed Benedict's cell, holding himself very erect, as was his custom when angry or excited.

Soon after, all lights were extinguished, and only the lightning flickered through the deserted passages. There was a noiseless strife in the air, and the Danube swelled and rushed impatiently toward the coming storm. Inside the church, well protected from wind and weather, burned the perpetual votive flame before the high altar.

As the clock struck eleven, two lights appeared in the monastery. One was carried to the cellar by the wine-loving Brother Cellarer. As he turned to shut the door, he saw the other light appear in the upper story of the opposite building and pass slowly along the row of windows. This light was carried by the Prior. He paused before the last cell—that of Benedictus. He listened at the door. All was quiet. He pushed back, hesitatingly, the panel of the door. A flash of lightning illumined the narrow room. It was empty; the bed was untouched.

The Prior gave a deep sigh, and his face twitched nervously with vexation and disappointment. Then he took up the light and hurried down into the church. The whole length of the church was perforated by windows, which opened toward the left on the quadrangle, and toward the right on the river. The windows on either side of the high altar were only a few feet from the floor, the choir being raised considerably above the nave. The Prior held his hand in front of the candle. All was dark, solemn, still. Only when a lightning flash quivered through the windows, the white pillars shot up to view. Far away, before the high altar, the perpetual light was drawn far down, and a solitary monk sat upon the steps and read by its glimmering beams. This monk was Benedictus, and he was so deeply absorbed in his book that he was first aware of the Prior's presence when he felt the latter's hand on his shoulder. Benedictus turned pale and stood up, but he showed no fear. So they stood silently for awhile, face to face—the tall, commanding Gregory,

and the modest figure of the scholar. The window toward the river beside the high altar was open, and they could hear the Danube rushing and beating on the walls. Suddenly the first thunder pealed slowly and re-echoed from the rocks.

The Prior restrained his anger with difficulty, as he slowly ascended the steps and made a genuflexion before the altar. Then he turned to Benedict, who followed him unwillingly, and rested his book on the altar.

"It must be a holy work," said the Prior glancing at the book, "a holy work which excuses to Father Benedict the breach of our Order's rule."

The other answered in his deep, rich voice: "Every book written by a reflecting mind is holy. It is Spinoza."

"Spinoza!" shrieked the Prior. Throwing himself on his knees and stretching his arms toward the tabernacle, he cried: "Lord! Enter not into judgment with the blasphemer!"

Then he sprang up and tore the monk's hand from the altar.

"Desecrate not the table of the Lord, madman! Is it not enough that you misuse the perpetual light for studies accursed of God?"

"The true perpetual light is the spirit, and that light of immortality is in this book also."

"You bring this atheism into God's house?" thundered Gregory. "On your knees, sacrilegious man!"

"I repeat that the work is not impious," replied the other proudly. "To know a thing one must first prove it."

"The Pope pronounced Spinoza and his work accursed. Do you wish to say that the Index lies?"

"Not that it lies, but that it contains mistakes."

"Accursed one!"

"And the earth moved, notwithstanding."

The Prior gasped for breath. "Lord! Lord!" he groaned.

Then he pointed to the sky which was all aflame.

"Hear the thunders of the Almighty! Are you not afraid of his wrath?"

"I recognize the Eternal everywhere in nature, not as wrath but as law; but to me this discharge of electric currents is less marvellous than the mind which understands it!"

"You have the pride of the serpent! You are no longer one of us! The church teaches submission; our Order, humility."

Benedict's eyes shone.

"The history of man's thoughts is the world's history!" cried he. "Woe be to you if in this new time you speak with the tongue of the Middle Ages! I cry to you, 'Forward!' Let us priests be thinkers, and once more we shall find the world at our feet!"

There was silence between the two. Gregory glanced out of the open window under which the river raged. It reminded him of the angry sea from which he had once rescued the boy Benedictus. Now his life-long friend was struggling in the whirlpool of vain speculation which seemed to him as bottomless as hell. He could only cry from the firm ground of his belief: "Save thyself!" Laying his hand tenderly on Benedict's shoulder, he pleaded with him to give up his pride and to throw the book into the Danube, to learn renunciation.

"I have learned renunciation!" whispered Benedictus, and, under the roll of the thunder, he heard far, far away, a woman's quiet weeping.

Then, drawing himself up to his full height, he said quietly but firmly:

"My spirit is building day and night on our Church —as the future will see her. This book is only a stone and if I should throw it away, you would find it again in my building."

The priest's anger redoubled. He clutched Benedict's arm, and urged him hoarsely to leave his blasphemous dreams, and not to bring shame and disgrace on the monastery—he would be the first to do so.

Benedictus waited until the thunder died away; then he replied: "I have never consulted nor spared my feelings. You must conquer my mind."

"Serpent!" shrieked Gregory. "By the power of my

office, I command you to throw that book into the Danube."

"The power of his office," answered the other bitterly, "led Torquemada to burn a hundred thousand folk who differed from him, and yet—a Luther arose. I shall cry, 'Forward!' to the uttermost parts of the earth. To-morrow you shall hear me do so from yonder pulpit to the listening multitudes."

"Never! Never!" screamed the Prior. And suddenly he sprang up like a tiger, lifted Benedictus, swung him with iron arms, and hurled him out of the window. The Prior just caught himself on the window-sill, heard a short cry, and a splash in the waves—then they were raging over Benedictus.

Why does the thunder choose this moment to hold its breath? Why does the roaring of the Danube cease just now? Oh, for a cry of help from the deep! What music it would be to Gregory's ear! He would spring down to save his Benedictus for the second time—but the waves whirl and rush onward, drawing a dead body with them into the world.

Gregory's light blew out, and a door slammed in the distance. He shrinks back, and this fear names his deed of darkness—murder!

"A murderer! Yes before God—but before no one else. The river has buried Benedictus, and my monastery remains free from shame!"

He starts up, and stumbles over the book which fell from Benedict in that terrible moment. Gregory trembles as he touches it, but yet he dares not throw it into the river. He hides it under his scapulary.

He wishes to leave the church, but he shudders at the yawning darkness. So he lights his candle at the perpetual light, which will never more shine upon Benedict's midnight studies. Then he staggers down into the nave—and leaves the church which he, the priest, has desecrated. A shrinking, curse-burdened criminal, he goes back to his cell, which he left as a stern judge, confident, trustful in God.

And so, broken down, weary of life, melting into tears of remorse, he throws himself before the crucifix and

repeats the prayer for the dead: "*Et lux perpetua luceat ei!*" "And let light perpetual shine upon him."

III.

Listen!

He knelt at the *prie dieu* in his cell, not in prayer, but listening with all his might for the sound of the gate-bell.

The rain pours down unceasingly, rustles in the ivy and beats on the window pane. Otherwise all is quiet, as quiet as if there were no one in the monastery except its unhappy Prior and that solitary ghost, Time, who now and again makes the clock strike in the belfry.

For a few seconds, Gregory's mind refused any longer to bear the torture of one thought. His eyes closed, and he was unconscious. Then he started up in delight. It must have been all a mistake. Benedictus could not have been drowned. The fishermen have rescued him, and in a few moments he will walk in and fall on his friend's neck. Gregory was in a rapture. Then the thought flashed across his mind that Benedictus was alive, but would not come back. He is in the city, accusing Gregory of an attempt to murder him. He appeals to the court.

Unwillingly, the Prior has walked to the window. He looks out on the river. It storms and blusters and thunders in his ears. He wrings his hands, himself a drowning man. That water is merciless: Benedictus is dead! Now the thing to do is to conceal the crime and to save the honor of the house.

The clock struck. The strokes had scarcely died away when the gate-bell rang. The trumpet of the judgment day could not sound louder or more threatening. Every one had heard it, every one had understood —its piercing sound said: "Murder!"

With a hasty effort at self-command, he took up a book. An embroidered bookmark fell out. It was Benedict's Spinoza. This reminded him why he had done the deed, and a little of the old stern spirit of judgment came over him again.

Now hurrying steps approach, voices call the Prior,

people throng into the room. Who? What? He sees and hears nothing; he only knows that he has now to tread the most difficult pathway of his life—and he walks on, upright, without a sound, with a face that already sees the Medusa.

The monks were standing about a stretcher in the gateway. A coarse cloth was spread over it. Heavy with rain, it outlined a body which lay beneath it; a hand fell out on one side,—a man's pale hand. They all knew, from the two boatmen near by, who it was who lay at their feet, but no one touched the covering. They shuddered and were still. The rain beat through the open gate. The Danube still rushed on.

Then the Prior stepped into the circle, and a monk bent down and drew back the covering. Benedictus! The black gown torn and dripping, the face changed by the water and by death. Every feature was painfully distorted. Only the forehead remained unchanged,—calm and holy. A chill shook Gregory's frame, and his face was the color of the dead, but who among those about him did not tremble? Who would not turn pale at such a sight?

One of the fishermen broke the silence:

"We carried him through the woods and over the fields, and no one saw us, your reverence, for I didn't want any one to see us, because I am proud of our monastery."

These words rang in the Prior's ears like the sound of a trumpet to a soldier. "Endure," he said to himself, and then gave softly the order to take Benedict to his cell. The melancholy procession moved across the quadrangle. There, under the crucifix, the Prior tottered and broke down. The priests sprang to him, but he straightened himself and signed to them, Forward!

"I can well believe that it cuts him to the heart," whispered Father Jerome to his companion. "Benedict has drowned himself, that is the truth. God be merciful to his poor soul!"

The monastic severity seemed to be relaxed for the day. The Prior shut himself in his cell and listened to the roaring and rushing waves.

Just before sunset the bells rang for the last time, for it was Wednesday in Holy Week. Notwithstanding the wind and weather, the church was crowded with worshippers—for was not the eloquent Father Benedict to preach?

He, however, was lying in the cell which he had occupied when alive. By the open coffin two monks prayed for the departed soul. They were relieved every hour by two others. The Prior had announced that he would take the death-watch himself at eleven o'clock. He had to do it, if he did not wish to bring the reproach of exceptional severity or weakness upon himself. As his hour struck, Gregory left his cell and went through the corridor to Benedict's—as he had done yesterday.

Two dim tapers faintly illumined the room. Gregory's first glance fell timidly and fearfully on the dead, as if expecting to see him raise himself up angrily and cry: "Away with you!" No, this face bore too plainly the signature of the grave. A second glance showed him the monk who knelt by the bier. It was Ambrosius, an old, old man, who had been blind for twenty years. The Prior gave a sigh of relief as his fear of a living witness of this hour vanished. He tried to pray as he hid his face in his hands. In vain! His thoughts fall down from Heaven, all his nerves are strained to listen to the noise which in the stillness of night and death sounds like the howls of the damned. The river roars and hisses, splashes and surges against the walls. Soon Gregory with his failing senses sees the waves of the Danube stretch up like arms toward the window—sees ghost-like heads with streaming white hair peering restlessly at the corpse. Then the apparition vanishes. The waves sink back into their bed, and their tumult subsides to a whisper. And now Gregory raises his face and stares at the dead.

As he gazes thus, strange thoughts come to him. He strives to pierce the mystery of death. Mocking fiends seem whispering terrible suggestions in his ear. The sweat of dread starts to his brow. He can find no answer to the questions which are surging through his brain. True, his doubts had not the method of the

schools—Benedictus would have smiled at them—but to Gregory, common man as he was, who would better have understood the management of the plow than of sharp-edged words, they were terrible, unanswerable, annihilating. First, he looks down from the secure height; then dizziness overtakes him; the ground breaks and sways beneath his feet; here and there he clings to the rocks; but even that which he took for granite is rotten and treacherous; everything reels and falls. He shoots down with the rapidity of an arrow, and finds himself in the abyss where darkness surrounds him, roaring waves rush together over him and mocking demons hurl him from deep unto deep.

"Lord God!" he prayed then, wringing his hands, "forsake me not! Shall I then doubt—I, who murdered the doubter?"

He sprang up and called aloud, half crazed with excitement, "Ambrose! Ambrose!"

The blind man raised his head. The Prior stood by the bier and turned his wildly-rolling eyes to the old man, resting his hand on the breast of the dead.

"Ambrose!" he gasped, "there are fates which no God, but rather hell, conceives and spins out to the end! This dead man was my friend. I grew up with him, shared with him the dreams of youth and the cares of poverty. I saved his life once, and we took at the same time the vows of our Order. When he came into my room, it seemed to me that the day dawned, and if he were ill, I stirred not, night nor day, from his sick-bed. By the Almighty! I loved him as a brother, and yet this man—this brother, I have—Ah!"

He started back suddenly with a piercing shriek. He had touched the ice-cold hand of the dead.

"Father," continued the unhappy man, "you cannot conceive what a fever rages within me! Your blood flows calmly, and your passions do not tempt you. Oh! would that I had been blind like you!"

The old man lifted his trembling hand, and said slowly and solemnly: "I have the perpetual light!"

"The perpetual light?" stammered Gregory, and fell down unconscious.

And all was still in the chamber, which contained three great mysteries: Blindness, Death, and Sin.

As the bell struck midnight, the monks who entered found their Prior stretched senseless over the corpse. They carried him to his cell.

IV.

In the evening of Holy Thursday, a boat glides down the Danube through the mist, bearing the body of Benedictus to a suicide's burial—far from the monastery and in unconsecrated ground. Two monks crouch beside the bier—Father Jerome and the Brother Cellarer. The latter's face looks woebegone, and no efforts of the priest can make him say anything but: "*Memento mori!*"

At last the boat makes a landing, and the men carry the coffin up a steep ravine to the foot of a giant oak, where a grave has already been dug. A flickering light appears on the cliff above and slowly descends. The red glare of a torch shows the Prior, accompanied by one of the monks, who pause a short distance off, as is the custom at such burials.

The monks do their sad office quickly, but to Gregory the moments stretch themselves out unbearably. The blood mounts to his head; his lips are dry and burning, in spite of the misty rain; his hands clutch the air convulsively.

At last the coffin is placed in position. A word of command, and it slides down with a hollow sound.

What will Heaven's thunders in future be in comparison with this?

Quickly now, heap up the earth! They all take a hand, shovel, scrape up and pour in the earth. Gregory wishes that they might cause the cliffs to fall together over the grave.

And now, at last, he draws near to read the customary prayers for the dead. The monks sing the responses in a low mournful chant. The effect of the group, standing in the red light under the dark sky and looming rocks, and the plaintive sound of the Latin chant, sung

by men's voices, and accompanied by the rushing of the stream, was strange and wild, but yet most solemn.

The Prior sang, in a trembling voice, the last prayer: "*Requiem æternum dona ei, Domine!*" and the monks chanted loudly the response: "*Et lux perpetua luceat ei.*" The sound seemed to re-echo from the cliffs across the river.

"*Et lux perpetua luceat ei!*" So long, Gregory, as prayers shall be offered by the Church for the dead, so long shall these words testify against thee: "And let light perpetual shine upon him!"

They went back in silence to the monastery, and found the rest of the monks waiting in the refectory. Gregory came in hastily, took his place, and said in a raised voice: "I have joyful tidings to share with you. A messenger has just brought me word that on Easter Sunday, His Eminence, Bishop C——, will come to us. He will probably spend the holy day here."

Without looking up, Gregory crossed himself and said grace. But as soon as they were seated, the general joy and excitement found vent, for it was many years since the monastery had been thus honored. All this happened on Holy Thursday. On Good Friday morning the gates were flung back, and the country people poured into the quadrangle and stationed themselves on the steps of the church. The sky was cloudy, but it did not rain, and the wind was from the east.

Then the great door swung back to let forth the solemn Good Friday procession. First was carried a cross with streamers of crape, then came the trumpeters playing a funeral march, and after them the choristers and then the monks, carrying lighted tapers in their hands. Acolytes swung their censers, and out of this cloud of incense gleamed the pyx borne by Gregory. The Brothers of the Order brought up the rear. The people sank on their knees as the procession passed out of the gates to the river-bank.

The trumpets ceased, and again it seemed to Gregory that the earth stopped in its course, so that everything should listen to the rushing of the Danube—which he was now to bless.

Slowly he lifted his arms, he swung the pyx on high

and blessed the river—the river, his companion in crime, which swallowed up Benedictus. A wave struck the shore, splashed upon his vestments and retreated.

Again the trumpets sounded, and the procession moved back to the church. Laying his vestments aside, Gregory threw himself prone upon a cross which lay before the high altar. There, in the sight of all the people, he lay and prayed inwardly—yes, he prayed!

"I have sinned, Lord! I have sinned, not from worldly motives, but from righteous wrath. A priest stands above earthly judgment. He is answerable to God alone!"

As he raised himself, a small metal cross fell from his neck. It was the gift of his mother, a poor old peasant woman still living in the mountains.

Gregory, dost thou also stand above this judgment?

V.

Even Gregory found repose. He slept the sleep of exhaustion that Good Friday night, but he did not smile, like other men on awaking, at the sun which shone gloriously in the blue sky, after all those dreary days. The brilliant light was terrible to him, and he would have been glad to hide in the depths of the earth; but the noise which, early as it was, sounded through the monastery, reminded him of his position, of the festival and of the bishop.

Every one was so busy all day that the Prior's pale face, his wandering eye and his nervous twitching, passed unnoticed. At last the preparations were finished, the bell sounded once more, and the community streamed across the quadrangle to the church. But Gregory stood before the door of the library, with his hand before his eyes. The Brother Cellarer approached, and timidly asked him who were to be the confessors after vespers.

"Father Ambrose—Jerome—and—I," the Prior answered, after a short pause.

Then he went into the library and, opening the bow-window, looked thoughtfully out at the river.

"It is calm again, and a mirror of heaven," thought Gregory, "and I—after a terrible crime—I am still a priest! And what if a murderer should come to my confessional, and tell me of a secret crime? What shall I say, in God's stead, to the sinner? Go thy way, do penance, reconcile thyself with men and with human law. If my remorse—if my tears might expiate my sin! But I must either confess my sin—or shake off remorse, lift up my head and say the priest may also be the avenger!" He turned from the window, and his eyes fell on the manuscript on which Benedict had been writing. It was a history of the Priors of Telsenburg, and there on the last page was his own name: "185— Gregory Augustus, P.O.S.B."

Gregory stared at the empty space below. Does no unseen hand write, as on the wall of Belshazzar: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin?"

"No!" he cries, and sinks down confounded. "On the day of judgment but one word shall flame on this page—Cain!"

Vespers are ended as the Prior walks slowly through the quadrangle to the House of God.

The last wreaths and triumphal arches are being put into place by busy workers in the clear evening light, but within the church all is dark and solemn and still. A tall monk seats himself in one of the confessionals, his pale face turned toward the perpetual light. A Brother of the Order throws himself at once on his knees at the lattice and begins to whisper in the other's ear: "Reverend Father, a fearful secret weighs upon my soul. Fear and torture of my conscience hinder my sleep at night, and my prayers in the daytime. I once spent the night, against the rule of my order, over my wine, and was the invisible witness of a murder by an ordained man whose victim was also a priest. The murdered man was buried in unconsecrated ground as a suicide, but the truth is undiscovered, for I have kept silence."

The confessor's head had fallen heavily on his breast, and his trembling hand was scarcely able to hold the white cloth before his face.

The penitent continued:

"Now that I have freed my heart from this horrible curse, God will give me peace, and you as His priest will give me absolution. But to you, unhappy Gregory, I swear in this holy hour eternal silence. I hereby give to you, who can absolve me from the sin of concealment, my secret as your secret before God, and may His perpetual light of mercy shine upon us both!"

The white cloth fell, and Gregory's face was revealed. His hair was matted on his temples, his eyes stared and his lips twitched. He gasped for words, and found them not. He neither heard nor saw what was going on about him. Night fell, and the church had long been forsaken of all; but Gregory sat still in the confessional, his eyes fixed, his brow throbbing, and pondered over the words: "*Absolvo te!*"

VI.

Easter Sunday! The bishop has been welcomed by great crowds, and conducted with much ceremony to the church, blessing the people as he went.

As Gregory knelt on the altar-steps before high mass began, he heard the window over the Danube creak in the morning wind. The sound nearly drove him crazy. He shuddered during mass with nameless sensations—not thoughts, only feelings, as yet.

When the Sanctus was over and the Elevation of the Host was near, the organ and the trumpets were hushed. The violins began a soft melancholy air, and a melodious boy-voice sang: "*Benedictus.*"

Then Gregory no longer kept back the springing tears. He pressed his forehead on the step as he knelt, and sobbed aloud, quite overcome by yearning and sorrow for Benedictus.

As soon as the mass was over, the preparations were begun for the assembly of the priests. In the mean time Gregory was in the sacristy with the bishop. The latter was looking over the church records, and paused in sorrow at the inscription which told of Benedict's death.

"And you have no idea how he came to so sad an end?" he said.

"He was a skeptic," stammered the Prior, with white lips.

"Who has not been that?" said the bishop softly.

The other stared at him, horrified. "Benedict was tempted to forsake our Holy Church," said he.

The bishop sighed.

After a moment's thought, he said, "And yet I would rather know him to be among the apostates than among the dead—for who can call a living man lost?"

"I feel how deeply this accident must affect you," continued the old man, "as his Prior, and still more as his friend. I remember to have heard from Father Benedict that you once saved his life."

Gregory moaned and wrung his hands. "Be comforted," said the bishop gently. "God is more merciful than we men."

"True!" whispered the Prior, who was confounded by the bishop's every word.

At last he stammered out: "Your reverence, skepticism is increasing every day. Why should we not use the judgment sword of past centuries?"

A shadow passed over the bishop's face; then, with a faint smile and lifting his hand, "Friend," said he, "let us be shepherds, not executioners."

A few moments later Gregory staggered into the church. There by the fatal window stood the Brother Cellarer—the only one in the world who knew his secret. A shudder passed through him—a terrible thought—and then he cried so that it echoed through the church:

"Away with you! Gregory is here!"

The monk turned and caught the tottering man in his arms.

"*Memento mori*," he said.

The monks, the bishop's canons and vicars, the priests of the adjacent parishes, and the bishop himself came in and seated themselves. There were over a hundred clergy in the choir, but the nave was silent and empty. The bishop made a short address, referring to the prosperity of the monastery and the good accomplished by

it. "It was due," he said, "under God, to the rare virtues of the Prior, and he had been commissioned to express the value which Rome set upon his services." Then he concluded:

"Gregory, *Abbot* of Telsenburg, serve henceforth the church, mankind, and the perpetual light!"

All eyes are fastened on the Prior, who rises hastily and makes two or three steps forward. A storm of feeling is raging within him—joy and pain, satisfaction and despair. His fate lies in his hand. Here, shame, cursing and rejection—but also right and expiation. There, a career of power and respect, beneficence and silent penance—but also of deceit and everlasting tumult of conscience. He thinks of the honor done to him and to the monastery, hears his old mother's rejoicings, and stretches out his arms, as if to clasp hope to his breast.

As he raises his eyes beseechingly toward heaven, he sees over his head the lamp of Benedictus—the perpetual light. He crosses his hands on his breast, totters forward, kneels on the steps of the bishop's chair, and his deep, metallic voice sounds through the silence: "Most Reverend Bishop, Fathers and Brothers, I—I am the murderer of Benedictus!"

Those who enjoy broad humor will like this "roistering" Southern sketch by C. W. Chestnut.

A TIGHT BOOT.

Some years before the war, 'Squire Mirabeau Mackinnon kept the Jefferson House at Macedonia, the county-seat of one of the up-country counties of North Carolina. The hotel was a big, two-story frame house, fronting on the Court-House square, with broad piazzas running along both stories, front and rear. A row of big elms along the sidewalk made a pleasant shade for loiterers on the front piazza, and sheltered from the summer heat the horses that were fastened to the dozen or more hitching-posts. Beyond the sidewalk a well and a watering-trough furnished additional facilities for the accommodation of the public. Back of the house, and separated from it by the clean-swept yard, stood the big red kitchen. The yard was perfectly innocent of grass or herbage of any kind—unless the elms and china-trees might be included under that head—and by constant trampling was as hard and white as an ancient threshing-floor.

During the greater part of the year the Jefferson House did not do much business. The farmers on their way down to the larger towns on the navigable rivers, or near the coast, with wagon-loads of cotton and tobacco, would stop at the Jefferson over night, settling their bills when they came back with plenty of money, and supplies of sugar, coffee, calico and other luxuries which were not produced on their plantations. Now and then town-folks came up to Macedonia to spend a few weeks of the hot season; and occasionally a "speculator," or dealer in human flesh, would come along through the country, picking up choice wares for the remote Southern market. Of course everybody stopped at the "Jeff'son."

Court-week was the busy season at the Jefferson House. Court was in session for a week or ten days

several times a year, and on these occasions the hotel was filled to overflowing. In summer hammocks were swung on the piazzas, and in winter pallets made on the floor, for those whom there were not beds to accommodate. The judges, the lawyers, and the County dignitaries who came in from their plantations to attend court, all put up at the Jeff'son House, and kept Squire and Mrs. Mackinnon and their corps of servants very busy.

The duty of blacking the boots for the guests devolved upon a colored man by the name of "Bob." Under ordinary circumstances Bob enjoyed a sinecure, and was only consoled for his hard lot during court-week by the numerous dimes and quarters which he extorted from the good-natured gentlemen whose boots were the objects of his gentle ministrations.

One evening during the Summer term, Bob went around, about ten o'clock, to the rooms of such guests as had retired, and collected the boots for cleaning. He took them to the kitchen, and in order to lessen his work in the morning, blacked about half the lot. He wanted to attend a colored dance at a cabin a mile from the hotel; and while his orders were to stay at home, he thought he might slip away an hour or two without his absence being noticed.

While he was revelling in the anticipation of the fine sport he would have, and keeping time with the blacking-brush to the strains of an imaginary banjo, he took up a remarkably neat boot. It was a big boot, but made of fine leather, and quite new. It struck Bob that that boot was just about his size; and it looked so neat he thought he would try it on. It went on without difficulty, though it was a little tight about the hollow of the foot and the heel. Then it occurred to Bob that those boots would look nice on him at the ball. He drew on the other, and jumping over the back fence, made his way to the house where the party was in progress.

The laws forbade any assemblage of the slaves, and when they had their balls, prayer-meetings, etc., it was customary to station sentinels along the roads and paths

which led to the meeting-place, to watch for the patrol, —or "patterole," as the natives called it,—a sort of mounted police, whose special duty it was to keep the slaves under surveillance. At night, Bob avoided the patrol by going through the woods, passed the sentinels, and was soon swinging the girls around, and displaying the new boots, to the inspiring strains of "Camptown Races" and "Old Dan Tucker," as rendered by the combined exertions of a banjo, a fiddle and a pair of bones.

The fun was at its height, when some one dashed up to the door, and yelled "Patterole!" Instantly the candles were blown out, a bucket of water was thrown on the fire, and the crowd rapidly dispersed through the various openings of the cabin,—one frightened fellow going out through the big mud chimney. It was a false alarm, given by some ill-natured darky who had not been invited to the ball; but Bob did not know this, so he dodged into the bushes, and by cutting across the plantations, kept clear of the patrol, and reached the hotel at about two o'clock in the morning.

He tried to pull the boots off; but either the peculiar conformation of his heel prevented it, or his feet were so swollen by his recent exertions that the boot did not budge. As Bob was very tired and sleepy, he spread a quilt on the kitchen floor, and went to sleep, confident that in the morning the boots would come off without difficulty.

The cook, Aunt Lyddy, went in the kitchen early in the morning, and found Bob fast asleep on the floor. She called him, but got only a grunt in response. Finally a gourd of water thrown in his face brought about the desired result, and Bob got up, rolled up his pallet and put it away, grumbling at Aunt Lyddy's cruelty.

"Better g' long an' black dem boots," said Aunt Lyddy, who was a woman of few words.

"Wait till I git dis boot off, Aun' Lyddy," replied Bob; he had pulled off one boot, and as he began an account of the ball the night before, he took hold of the other with the confident expectation that it would slip

off easily. His confidence was somewhat shaken when the boot showed no sign of yielding. He had no better success with a boot-jack, and Bob began to get just a little anxious. Breakfast time was drawing near, and the gentlemen would want their boots. One of them came to the top of the stairs, and called:

"Boy!"

Squire Mackinnon, who was not yet dressed himself, heard the call and came to his bed-room door.

"Well, what is it, Colonel?" he asked.

"Tell that boy to bring my boots, if you please, Squire."

Squire Mackinnon went to the back door, and called across the yard in his sharp way:

"Bob, you Bob!"

"S-s-s-s-ah!" replied Bob, who labored under a slight impediment in his speech, which came out strong when he was excited.

"Colonel Tyson wants his boots!"

"Y-a-a-a-s, s-s-s-ah!" replied Bob, tugging away desperately. The sweat had collected in great beads on his forehead, and rolled in dirty streams down his cheeks.

"Fur de Lawd's sake, Aun' Lyddy, he'p me git dis boot off," he said imploringly.

"I can't take my han's out'n de dough," said Aunt Lyddy, who was filling a big pan with biscuits. But she called in another servant from the yard—Isham—and he added his efforts to those of Bob, but all in vain. The boot stuck—closer than a porous plaster—closer than poor relations—closer than Sindbad's Old Man of the Sea,—as close as though it were glued to his foot.

The Colonel was growing impatient. He came to the door again and called:

"Boy, I want them boots right off!"—the Colonel was more anxious about his boots than his grammar.

Squire Mackinnon, in shirt and trousers, came to the back door again.

"Bob, Bob, you Bob!"

"Y-a-a-s-s, Marse!" came from the kitchen in anxious tones.

"Bring Colonel Tyson's boots right away!"

Bob was now in despair. He knew his master's disposition, and trembled for the probable consequences if he did not get that boot off very soon. His shirt was wet with perspiration, and his eyes stood out like a couple of dinner-plates. Aunt Lyddy, who had finished the biscuits,—Phyllis, Chloe, Isham and another boy who had come in from the stable,—all united in the fruitless attempt to get that boot off. Isham had hold of the boot in front, and Aunt Lyddy had Bob by the waist; the others were ranged behind her and Isham respectively, all pulling hard, but with no success. The stubborn boot would not come off.

The Colonel came out on the upper floor of the piazza, and thundered out:

"I want them boots, blacked or not blacked, and I want 'em quick!"

"Wha-a-a-t!" said the Squire, as he heard the Colonel's loud tones, and ran out, still half-dressed, upon the lower floor of the piazza, "ain't that infernal scoundrel fetched them boots yet?"

The other gentlemen had begun to call for their boots, and Squire Mackinnon, fearful of offending his guests, walked quickly across the yard to the kitchen, to see what was the matter. Bob and his friends were still pulling away in sheer desperation, and the boot had begun to rip a little at the heel. Squire Mackinnon was puzzled for a moment, and then the full meaning of the situation dawned upon him.

"What the d—l does this mean?" demanded he.

"I j-j-j-i-s' put the boot on to black it better, Marse, and it won't come off no mo," replied the trembling Bob.

The Squire pushed the others aside, caught the boot by the heel, and jerking the unfortunate Bob from the chair, dragged him around the kitchen. As he went around, Bob caught at whatever came in his way; he overturned several chairs; he caught the leg of the table, and the dishes came down with a crash; and as the Squire, in his mad career, whirled him around again, he caught Aunt Lyddy by the ankle, causing

that amiable woman and accomplished cook to lose her balance, and sit down in the big pot of hot water on the hearth. It is needless to say that she lost no time in getting up again.

As the angry Squire made more circuits of the kitchen, Bob caught by the door-frame, and held on "like grim death." The Squire gave one "last, long, lingering" pull, and off came the boot!

The said boot continued to play an important part in the scene that followed for a few minutes, and Bob had ample time, while recovering from his bruises, to reflect on the sin of vanity, of the evil consequences of which his experience had certainly qualified him to think intelligently. He stayed at the Jefferson House until near the end of the war, when he drifted off in the wake of Sherman's army. Up to that time, however, he was not known to indulge again in the luxury of wearing other men's boots.

This touching story of love and devotion is from the pen of Eliza Lynn Linton, and first appeared in *Temple Bar*.

MY SISTER GUINEVERE.

You say you are surprised my sister Guinevere never married; that, beautiful as she is now in the faded pallor of her forty years, she must have been supreme in her early youth; and that her grand manner alone would seem to have marked her out for a noble alliance —one chosen from among the many of the highest in the land offered to her. And you are too well-bred to add what I see you feel clearly enough, that you are just as much surprised to find me, who am a mere nobody compared to my sister—small and dark and shy even yet, for all my four big boys, while she is tall and fair and regal—here at the the head of this princely establishment, and the wife of a man like my husband, for whom Guinevere seems to be in every way better fitted than myself. Well, it is strange, I admit. But shall I tell you my sister's story? It is not quite one of every-day life, though there is nothing outrageously "sensational" in it. Still, it may interest you as a study of circumstance and character; and, at all events, it is true.

We were always what you see us now—the queen and her subject, the adored and her adorer, a mistress and her slave. Guinevere, five years older than I, was, as long as I can remember, like some kind of superior being whom it was my duty as well as my joy to worship and obey. Her beauty was always phenomenal to me, more especially as I had none. She was our crown imperial, our stately lily, our royal queen, our hope, our love, our enchantment. There were no brothers, and she was the heir. We were not made joint heiresses; but Guinevere, as was only fitting, was made sole heiress, and I had a younger child's portion. When my father explained this to me, I told him how glad I was, as Guinevere was born for wealth

and position, and I was not; and it was only right that she should keep the family name when she married, and be the representative of the house as if she had been a son. She was the superior, and my queen.

"Then you are not jealous—not disappointed, little Rachel? You do not think I have done wrong by you?" my dear father said, drawing me nearer to him.

I thought he looked a little anxiously into my face, as if he were troubled and wanted reassuring. Dear, dear father! I have often thought since that he was not quite sure of the rightness of his decision. But it was right, quite right.

I was almost sixteen when this was told me. Guinevere was just twenty-one. At sixteen a girl is rarely very solicitous about money or the future; and I did not care for either one or the other. But if I had, I should have been rejoiced all the same that my sister should receive by my father's will what she deserved by right of natural inheritance; and that she should be made the head of the house by law, as she was our queen by love.

Beautiful as she was, the heiress of such a fine estate as the Knoll, and with what my mother prized quite as much as her beauty—what I once heard called the "main factor in the sum of her charms"—her perfect style—you may be sure that lovers were not wanting to Guinevere. She had as many as Portia; and she was as difficult to please as her prototype. She took exception to every one, and made insuperable obstacles out of the most trivial matters.

For whom or what was she waiting? My mother used to ask her that question twenty times a week, but Guinevere always answered the same thing: "For Prince Charming." Which was all very well, as mother said, but she might have found him before now in the crowd of suitors who had made her the offer of their hands and hearts and rent-rolls and estates.

At last he seemed to have come. At least we all thought so, and it seemed impossible that Guinevere should not think so too. Our neighbor, Morse Herbert, came home. He had been a long time abroad—ever

since his father's death—but at last he came back and prepared to live at his beautiful place. Every one was very glad; for an empty house like Wilmington Hall makes a great difference in a small society like ours; and then Mr. Herbert himself was popular, though his was not an old county family—his father had been a new man among us—and people were pleased to see him again. He is handsome now, but in those days, twenty years ago, he was simply magnificent. He was as handsome for a man as Guinevere was for a woman. And that was saying everything. When they stood side by side together, it was really grand to see them. They looked like something one had seen in a dream or a picture—something ideal and beyond one's ordinary experience. It was evidently *the* match for Guinevere. He was rich, of right age, handsome, in every way desirable; and though his father had been a new man among us, Morse himself was, as you know him, something more than an every-day gentleman. He was a Bayard. Soon the neighborhood settled it all to its own satisfaction and gave these two to each other, according to the law of manifest fitness and destiny, as they said. And soon, of course, he fell in love with her. Who could help it? They all did. Besides, these two were fitted for each other! No; do not shake your head. They were in those days; if only she could have seen it and made herself soft and plastic! It seemed as if nature had betrothed them and some malign influence interfered to prevent the thing from going right. For, in spite of all Morse Herbert's handsome looks and fine estate, in spite of all his noble nature and fervent love, Guinevere would have nothing to say to him. When he made her the inevitable offer, she refused him, just as she had refused others; and all that could be got out of her, when my father and mother remonstrated with her, was: "He is all very well, but he is not Prince Charming."

I remember my father turning away in a rage when she said this in her quiet, half-sarcastic way. He was so seldom angry, dear good father, that it made a great impression on me.

"The girl is crazed with vanity," I heard him say in a low voice. "She does not know what she wants; and some day she will make a tremendous mistake, and then she will come to her senses when it is too late. That will be her punishment."

This matter of Morse Herbert's, however, did not rest here, for that evening my father and mother had a long talk with Guinevere, to which I was not admitted, but which ended by Guinevere's consenting to something unpleasant.

And one day—I do not know why, but I believe that my mother wrote to him—Morse Herbert came over to the Knoll, about half-an-hour before luncheon. He was with Guinevere alone in the drawing-room for some time, and brought her in to luncheon on his arm. I remember how deadly pale she was, and how flushed and triumphant, yet ill at ease, he looked. And I remember how he trembled like a girl when he shook hands with me, and said in a voice that was scarcely like his own:

"You must congratulate me, Rachel; I am going to be your brother, and marry Guinevere."

So then he and my sister were engaged! The proud and stately swan was at last tamed; the flower had at last opened to the sun! But by what means? Not ordinary ones, for the engagement was not like those one reads of, or fancies for one's self when one is young; and for the first and only time in my life I was inclined to be hard on Guinevere. She was so cold to him, so disdainful. At her best she was only placidly indifferent; at her worst she was actively sarcastic, and seemed to take a cruel pleasure in wounding him. And I thought that, as she had accepted him, she ought to have behaved with more consideration. I used to wonder how he bore it, such a high-spirited man in all other things as he was. But he was so desperately in love with her in those days he would have borne anything, only for the delight of sitting by her and looking at her and calling her his.

I was very sorry for him, and he knew it. Without being a traitress to my darling, my queen, I could not

help pitying this great, handsome, manly fellow, whom she treated so badly; so that at the last he got into the habit of coming to me for comfort, as he said—for if I were not the rose, I lived near it; if I were not Guinevere, I was her sister.

So we talked to each other, always skirting round, but never coming to the full admission of Guinevere's want of love for him; I doing my best to give him hope and courage, till he got at last to really love me like his sister, and to mean it when he called me his comforter and his good angel.

This was now the early summer, and the marriage was to take place in the autumn. Meanwhile we all went down to a Scotch castle, Glenbarron; and Morse Herbert, as Guinevere's *fiancé*, went too.

The Glenbarrons of that ilk were nice people. Lord and Lady Glenbarron, and their daughter Adeline, were charming; but I did not like Donald, the eldest son. The second, Mackenzie, was much better; in fact, he was as nice as his parents and Adeline. But Donald was one of those fast, dissipated men who are only 'Arrys with a correct accent and perfect taste in dress. He was a man who always looked as if he had been up all night—very pale, as thin as a grasshopper, and with those red eyelids and that odd smeared kind of mouth which make you think of drinking, as if they had been reddened by the lees of wine. He made me feel that he was living on the brink of a precipice—as if from day to day his character and honor were unsafe, and might at any moment be destroyed by some terrible disclosure. I know he made his father and mother very anxious; and Adeline, who was gentleness in person, was sometimes severe enough on him. In fact he was a horror; but, poor wretch! he had some good points in him, as you will see. He had brought down to the castle with him a Hungarian prince with an unpronounceable name. I never could pronounce it, and do not know how it was spelt; but as he was always called Prince, it does not much signify what his name really was. He was a great friend of Donald's; and, perhaps partly on that account, I took a violent hatred

to him from the beginning. Do not laugh, and look as if I am unable to take a violent hatred to any one. We quiet little women are often volcanoes like the rest; only our fire lies a little deeper than with some, and our explosions are not so frequent. But if I hated him, I was the only person who did—except perhaps Adeline. And she did not so entirely detest him as I did. She only did not like him; and Mackenzie, too, was indifferent to him; so was Morse Herbert. But every one else praised him to the skies and applauded him to the echo. He was very, very handsome—that I must confess; neither so tall nor so finely built as Morse—of a slighter, lighter kind altogether, and as dark as Morse was fair. But he had really an almost perfect face of its kind, and he had the most graceful manners you can imagine. They were as perfect as his face. Though I did not like him, I could not be blind to the things which fascinated others—his grace, his beauty, his readiness to oblige, his pretty way of asking you by his manner to forget that he was a prince, while he himself always remembered it; and then his cleverness. He was undeniably clever. He spoke all the principal languages, one as well as another, and all well. His English, indeed, was almost like an Englishman's. He danced most beautifully, and sang well; played the piano well; rode and fenced and played billiards and all that; was a first-rate shot; and was most amusing besides. He could do all sorts of conjuring tricks as well as any professed prestidigitateur. One day Lord Glenbarron said to him, laughing:

"Well, Prince, if ever you are brought down to the bare boards, you can get your living as a conjuror, or worse. By George, those trumps!"

"Think so?" the Prince said with a smile; but I was surprised to see how he flushed up, like a girl more than a man; and though he smiled, he did not look quite pleased. Never after this did he do any more conjuring tricks for us! Lord Glenbarron had evidently piqued him somehow.

When the Prince first came, he devoted himself to Adeline. This was perhaps natural, seeing that she

was the daughter of the house, and so sweet and pretty in herself; but she was so decidedly cool to him that he seemed to get tired of paying her compliments and looking into her eyes. Besides, Donald evidently did not quite like it; nor did Mackenzie. Indeed, I overheard Donald say to the Prince, in such a strange voice one day, when they were on the terrace below and I on that above:

"You promised me, Karl, by all you held sacred—if there is anything you hold sacred in Heaven or earth! —that you would leave my sister alone; and I hold you to your promise."

They passed out of hearing when Donald had said this, so I did not hear the Prince's answer. At all events, after this he left Adeline alone. But he turned to Guinevere, and paid her as much attention as he had paid Adeline in the beginning.

I could not understand my sister in these days. She, so proud and cold to all the world, so indifferent to her own affianced lover, Morse Herbert, became somehow a transformed being with the Prince. He could make her sad or merry, enthusiastic or angry, by his anecdotes of things and persons as no one else had ever been able to do. I have seen the tears in her eyes when he sang his plaintive Hungarian songs; and she never seemed to tire of his music. Hitherto she had certainly not been more enthusiastic about music than about anything else; now she would sit in a kind of hushed, rapt way when he played, and it was pathetic to see the way in which she came back to herself, and, as it were, reality, when he had finished. She grew, too, so much gentler to every one. Gentle is not quite the right word, for she was never anything but gentle —sympathetic, affectionate, rather—and to me especially so; to every one, indeed, save poor Morse Herbert, and to him her former chilling indifference changed into something that looked like hate and fear. He saw it too. I knew that he did, although he said nothing to me; but I saw it in his sad, grave, wondering eyes, in his compressed lips, in his forced calmness, and in the flashes of fire that sometimes shot from his

eyes when he looked at the Prince. Donald, too, was dreadfully disturbed. He had gone down before Guinevere, as all the world did, and he was madly in love with her. He knew that she was engaged, and he knew that there was no hope for him. That did not prevent his loving her, or wishing that there had been hope. Poor wretch! His love did him this good—it opened his eyes to his own vileness and made him ashamed of the infamous life he led in secret. For even if she had been free, he knew that he was unworthy of her; and that it would have been sacrilege to have mated such a pure and noble creature as she, such a spotless lily, such a stately swan, with a thing steeped to the lips in vice, a mere well-dressed, correctly speaking 'Arry!

What a dreadful time this was! Under the smooth exterior of a pleasant country party, here were we all in such turmoil and tumult of doubt and fear and love and sorrow as made the whole thing a tragedy.

I think I had as hard a part to play as any one. Guinevere made over Morse Herbert to me as if he had been a fan or a bouquet to hold. Whenever he wanted to be with her, she used to call me on some pretext, and then glide quietly away and leave us together. For the most part she went off with the Prince, and naturally Morse could not be so rude as to leave me alone.

One day he said:

"Ah, Rachel! if only Guinevere had your sweet nature and lovely character; and if only she cared for me as much as you do, dear little sister!"

"She is far better than I am, Morse," I answered; "and some day she will love you as you deserve to be loved."

I felt my face grow crimson when I said this, and, in spite of myself, the tears would come into my eyes —I do not know why—only perhaps it pained and shocked me to think that my sister—my queen, my star, my beloved—should have fallen so far below her best self as not to love this noble fellow, and to give him pain because of such a man as the Prince.

We were all out on the terrace that evening, and, as usual, the three men had clustered round Guinevere: Donald, the Prince, Morse Herbert. It was a kind of triangular duel among them—a trial of skill which should claim her attention and make himself the most favored. Morse, with an outburst of passion and pride strangely unlike himself, seemed as if he stood on his rights and intended to make Guinevere respect and acknowledge them. The Prince, quiet, subtle, fascinating, offering homage like incense, asked mutely for favor. Donald, feverish, eager, and in some sense insolent, at least to the Prince, flung himself, as it were, on the spears of her scorn, but with a wild, strange air as if he wished to protect her—from whom or what? And all this while she stood as a queen among them, supreme in her grace and beauty and unconquerable pride, at least to Morse and Donald, but all sweetness and almost tenderness to the Prince. Adeline and I, with Mackenzie and one or two others, were at a little distance from them—just a few steps; but I stood where I could see and hear all.

"How beautifully the moon shines on the fountain!" said Guinevere suddenly, looking down the long, dark avenue to where the fountain, at the end, shone in the moonlight like some pale softly shrouded ghost.

"Yes; let me take you to it," said Morse Herbert eagerly, offering his arm.

"Yes; let us go," said Donald, ranging himself on her other side.

The Prince said nothing, but he looked at her with pleading eyes, and she looked back at him with answering ones.

"Very well, we will go," said Guinevere. Then in her quiet, queenly way, turning to Morse, she said: "Morse, bring Rachel. The Prince will take care of me."

She ignored Donald Glenbarron altogether.

Such a strangely rapt, such a wonderful look of love and triumph and delight came on the face of the Prince as he took her hand and drew it on his arm! He was playing no part here. He did truly and really love

her. Who indeed could help it? But I saw Donald Glenbarron seize his arm and hold it for a minute as if in a vise, and I distinctly heard him say: "Scoundrel, you shall smart for this!" as he pushed past him rudely and left the terrace in a rage.

Morse, too, was painfully agitated, and I could feel his arm tremble with suppressed passion. But what could he do? He was not the kind of man to make a vulgar brawl for the favor of any woman. If she preferred another to himself, though it broke his heart, he would respect her choice. He might, being a man, find some occasion to revenge himself on his rival, but he would not make a scene in the presence of his lady, and he would not found his quarrel on her name.

I did my best to console him, but my best was very, very little. How could I console him in his terrible position, with all the agony and humiliation that beset it? What were my fullest love and sympathy to him, compared with the want of Guinevere's? He seemed pleased, however, by my tenderness, and he made my heart light for all its sorrowful heavings for him, by the way in which he said:

"My darling little sister, without you I should be wrecked indeed! You are the only point of light in my present life. You are worth very much to me—you are very, very dear."

"I wish I could make you happy," I answered. "I would if I could, heaven knows."

"I know you would," he said; "and so far as you can, you do. But things will have to come to an explanation. For my own self-respect I must not endure this position any longer. It is unbearable, and I should despise myself if I did not put an end to it. I must make Guinevere explain herself clearly; and if she cannot love me——" He stopped, for his voice suddenly broke, and I saw him raise his hand to his throat, and loosen the knot of his necktie.

"Then we shall lose you again," I said; and tears came into my eyes whether I would or no.

"You will never lose me," he answered, pressing my hand kindly. "To the end of my life I shall never

forget your sweet kindness to me in my trouble; and never cease to love you as my dear little sister, my sweet child-friend."

"Thank you," I said; but I was not quite a child. I was nearly eighteen now. Guinevere was just twenty-three.

That night there was an awful row among the men downstairs. I was standing by my open window, for I was too unhappy and bewildered to sleep, and I heard first Donald and Morse talking together, then Donald and the Prince. I did not hear the whole conversation of course. I did not listen, and I could not have heard it all even if I had listened. Besides, I did not wish to hear it. But I did hear Donald say to Morse: "Leave him to me, Herbert, I will settle him better than you can"; and I heard him afterward say to the Prince: "You are a scoundrel—a bigger scoundrel than I thought you, Karl. If you do not drop it, I will expose you, cost what it may."

I will not add the oaths and bad language with which he clinched this declaration. I did not hear what the Prince said in reply. He had a soft, low voice, and always spoke in a rather subdued tone; but Donald's voice was harsh and loud and rough, and he never modulated it, so that it was easy to hear his answer in return, though I could not catch a sound of the other.

"I do not care," he said. "I will face the exposure, and live through it or go under, I do not care which, so long as I save that girl, of whom it is desecration to talk to such a villain as you, from the profanation of your so-called love."

After a moment, during which I heard the liquid murmur of the Prince's voice, he said again:

"Do your worst! If I am in your power, you also are in mine, and if I can save her, an ounce of lead more or less for myself makes very little difference."

Then I heard no more, for I went back into my room and shut the window close. I was trembling and terrified. It was as if I had seen just the shadow of some hideous monster advancing stealthily among us. I

could not cry out in warning, and I did not know the name or shape of the destroyer. I only knew that something was wrong, and that Guinevere was in danger now and to be made to suffer hereafter. I could do nothing, however. I dared not go to Guinevere's room; she was asleep, for I had left her asleep after I had read to her as usual. Every one was asleep!—even dear old nurse Brown, who had become my lady's-maid after she had left off being my nurse, and who loved me really more than my mother did, even she was asleep in bed—where she had left me, and where I ought to have been now. I was the only one up and awake. I was obliged then to carry my secret as I best could until to-morrow. Even when to-morrow should have come, what could I do?

Nothing.

It was all taken out of my hands before I could speak, for Donald Glenbarron came up early into our private room, just after we had had our coffee, and so far fulfilled his threat to the Prince that he told Guinevere to beware of him.

"He is a rake, a gambler, and something worse," he said. "He is no more a prince than your footman is—no Hungarian, but just one of those well-set-up, flashy adventurers of no nationality in particular, who wander about Europe seeking for young men of family on whom to prey, and for young girls with fortunes to marry. Be advised in time," he said passionately, "you are going straight to your destruction else."

"And you ask me to believe that you have brought an adventurer down here to your father's house?" said Guinevere; "introduced him to your mother and sister and friends—endorsed his deceit and helped him in this bitter insult to all you hold dear and ought to hold sacred? I cannot think so ill of you! You accuse yourself of an amount of hardened villany of which I cannot possibly believe you capable!"

She got up when she said this, her cheeks flushed, her eyes flashing. I had never seen her so excited, never so beautiful.

"It is true," said Donald. "Say what you like of

me, you cannot say harder things than I deserve. But it is true."

"No; it is not true," she answered. "One way or the other you prove yourself unworthy of credit. You have either done what a man should be shot for doing, or you are telling a falsehood for personal spite and jealousy! I prefer to believe the latter."

"Because you are infatuated, blinded, by your love," said Donald, with more a groan than articulate human speech. "And I—I am infatuated by my love for you, Guinevere! No, no! it is not infatuation—it is all that I have of good left in me! But because I love you, I will try and save you at the cost of my own ruin. I brought this man here to buy his silence—it was his price. He has the pull on me, and this was all I could do to keep him quiet. But now I fling up the sponge. Let the worst come if it will. So long as you are saved, I do not care what goes by the board."

"I will believe nothing," said Guinevere, her pale, proud face set like a mask. "The Prince is an honest and an honorable gentleman, and this is merely the ruse of a jealous man's mean anger. Unless he were to confess it with his own lips, I would believe nothing."

"Then, by heaven, he shall! he shall be made!" said Donald, in a low, concentrated kind of voice.

Guinevere smiled in her sarcastic way.

"You lose your time," she said coldly; "and, pardon me, I am engaged."

So Donald Glenbarron had nothing for it but to leave the room, having staked his all on the throw which for the moment he had lost.

The day was destined to be full of storms and adventures, of critical moments and decisive interviews. After the ten o'clock breakfast, Guinevere and the Prince disappeared. No one saw them go, but all of us who were at the back of this pitiful drama missed them after a while and felt sure that they were together. So they were—in the library; and when Morse Herbert and I went there—he on the pretext of finding a passage in Shakspere that he wanted to show me, but both of us with the idea that we might meet Guinevere

—sure enough we came upon her, standing by the table, her head erect, her lips set, her face as white as the handkerchief in her hand, and her proud, calm eyes wet with tears. The Prince was on the terrace outside. He had evidently leapt from the window on hearing our footsteps at the door.

When we entered, Guinevere came straight to us.

"I want you to release me from my promise," she said, looking into Morse Herbert's face. "It can be no pain to you. I have made it evident to you from the first that I do not love you; and lately I have made it evident to you that I do love some one else. You cannot want to marry me under such conditions as these. Give me back my promise, and find some one who will appreciate you better."

"You ask me like this for what is dearer to me than my life?" said Morse, covering his face.

"No," she said calmly; "I ask you for nothing of any value whatever. Would you care to have the mere shell, the husk, a thing in which there was no life, a thing which would be a mere name? I tell you frankly and quietly, I do not love you, and I do love some one else. Can you keep me to my promise after that?"

"No," said Morse in a low tone; "you are free."

Her face changed. Never before had she looked like this at Morse; never had she seemed so near to loving him as when she was accepting her release from her engagement. She held out her hand.

"I expected nothing else from you," she said, in a moved, earnest, almost reverent kind of way. "God bless you! you are the truest gentleman I know—excepting one—and you deserve to be happy. God bless you, Morse!—and thank you." Then she turned to me and drew me to her. "Comfort him, little Rachel," she said gently. "I know now what he suffers."

In another moment she had gone, and I saw her join the Prince on the terrace and offer him her hand.

"I am free now," she said, with a faint, sweet smile; "and at last I have found my Prince Charming!"

The Prince turned to her as a man might turn to a goddess. He took her hand and kissed it.

"And I have found my good angel, my queen, my deliverer!" he said. "To-day marks the birthday of my new life."

The news soon spread through the Castle, and naturally caused an immense sensation. It was the talk of the hour, and no one seemed able to think of anything else. Morse Herbert, dismissed in so summary a manner, and the Prince accepted in the next breath—no wonder people talked! But Guinevere had evidently "thrown her cap over the mill," as the French say, and cared for neither king nor kaiser, neither reality nor appearance.

Not an angel from heaven could have turned her at that moment. She had always been supreme in her own life—I will not call it self-willed; it is a harsh word, and I cannot judge her harshly. But she had been always given way to and made a little queen among us; and naturally now, when her heart was really touched and her whole being roused, she would not allow any one to influence her against her decision. My dear father was bitterly distressed; my mother, who always upheld and took her part, this time was not with her; Lord and Lady Glenbarron said they were shocked and sorry, and refused to vouch for the Prince in any way; Donald had disappeared, so he could say nothing; and Morse Herbert, who had gone, was not there to protect her, as else he would. But she bore it all without a word of regret, of apology, of self-defence. She merely said: "I love him; he is my choice. Come what may, he is the only man I will ever marry." And there the thing ended.

Other things ended as well as Guinevere's declaration—among them, both our stay and the Prince's. The Glenbarrons said they could not sanction such extraordinary proceedings, and that the Prince must go. Of course that meant us as well; and in a short time the maids had packed our trunks and we were ready to leave. Guinevere insisted on the Prince coming with us. My father refused, my mother remonstrated; but my sister said, in her quiet way, "Then I go alone with him"; and they had to yield.

We were all in the morning-room bidding our hosts good-by, for, though they disapproved strongly of the whole thing, they did not intend to make it a personal matter, and they wished to part on good terms.

Just as we were shaking hands, a noise was heard in the hall—a loud talking of many voices—among which we distinguished Donald's rough deep tones; and presently a trampling of feet came to the door of the room where we were. It was opened, and Donald came forward with a quick step and a desperate air. His face was flushed, his eyes wild and bloodshot, his hair tossed back from his forehead, his whole bearing that of a man drunk with some strong emotion. He had a paper in his hand, and he was followed by two policemen.

"That is the man," he said, pointing to the Prince. "Do your duty."

The policemen closed on the poor fellow like two bloodhounds, and in an instant he was handcuffed.

"That was unnecessary," he said very quietly. "I would have spared you now, coward and traitor!" he added to Donald; "but you shall die a dog's death yet!"

"What does all this mean? what is it?" said Guinevere, going up to the policemen, and laying her hand on the shameful wrists of the man she loved. "What insolence—what mistake—is this?"

"Arrested on a warrant for forgery and coining, miss," said one of the men in a matter-of-fact, business-like way. He could not have been less moved if he had said that it was an east wind or a south.

"How came this mistake?" she asked of the Prince, still holding his wrists.

Had she been speaking to a crowned king, she could not have thrown more courtly reverence into her manner—had she been speaking to her acknowledged husband, she could not have been more tender, more loving. It was wonderful, pathetic beyond words; to us who knew her it was the saddest part of this whole sad moment.

"I will explain it all to you, darling," he said in answer. "Trust me, it will all come right. Say only," he added, with a sudden change of manner from arti-

ficial confidence to natural despair—"say only that you love me, and that you will forgive me."

"I love you, and I have nothing to forgive; all to respect, all to admire," said Guinevere.

And then, proud, cold, haughty Guinevere, our queen and our beloved, stooped her stately head and kissed the Prince's shackled hands.

I cannot tell you what followed on this. It was a sudden scene of violence, of terror, of confusion, where I knew and saw nothing excepting the wild face of Donald Glenbarron as he rushed on the Prince and was kept off by the officers. I heard awful words spoken and awful accusations made. The Prince, roused to fury equal to his own, accused Donald of crimes as black as his own; and, at the best, there was always that one infamy which could not be denied, inasmuch as, knowing what this man was, he had brought him to his father's house and had introduced him to his mother and sister. The scene did not last very long; for the officers took away their prisoner—they had to remove Guinevere by force—and then Donald, with a wild embrace to his mother and Adeline, shaking hands with his father, and saying: "God bless you all! Try to forgive me!" rushed from the room, and we saw him no more. From that day to this he has neither been seen nor heard of. Whether he blew out his brains in some lonely part of the mountains where he has never been found, or flung himself into the river, and so was washed down to the sea, or went off to America or Australia under a feigned name—what he did, what became of him, no one knows, and I suppose no one ever will know. He was seen riding down the avenue at a tearing pace, and in the evening the horse came home dead-tired, and lame, and riderless. When he passed out of the lodge gates, he passed out of existence, so far as all his old friends and former life went; and his name is now a mere memory, and no more.

Our own family fortunes declined after this. My father's heart broke under the shame and disappointment of the whole thing; and my mother died not long after him. We found ourselves left very poorly off

indeed—which was the reason, I imagine, why my parents so much wished Guinevere to marry Morse—so that my darling, when she came to her heirship, had but little to inherit. Had she had more, it would have been all the same to her, for she could not administer. Her mind had given way under the awful shock it had sustained; and though always calm and gentle, she was no longer herself. For years she was like this. Never violent, never wild, she lived in a kind of dream, hourly expecting the Prince and always prepared for his coming. It was an awful time! And when I was alone, before I came to my happiness, it was terribly desolate and dreary. She is better now, but not quite as she was before all this came on her. She has still her hallucinations—still her false hopes and false beliefs, but she is no longer watched or guarded as before. Her only signs of malady now are her belief that the Prince will some day return, if not to-day, then to-morrow; that this house and estate are hers, and that she gave Morse to me. For, naturally, you see that he married me, as I am his wife and the mother of his four boys. He married me when he came home again, five years after all this misery—when I was left alone in the world, without father or mother, with not much money, considering how we had always lived, and with my darling sister in that sad state of health. And when he told me that he loved me, I nearly died for happiness! Of course we humor Guinevere in all she thinks and says. You see how he treats her—as if she were a little queen? It pleases her to believe that she is the mistress here, as she would have been at the Knoll, and that she is a kind of minor sovereign ruling over her domestic vassals; and why not let her be happy in her delusion? It is no hardship to me to treat her with semi-royal honors—and none to Morse. If his love for her has died out of the form it once had, his tenderness has not; and nothing would be too hard for him to do which should give her pleasure. I think she would die if she once realized the fact that her Prince Charming, whose shackled hands she kissed in reverence and love, was nothing but a nameless adven-

turer—a black-leg, a forger, and a coiner; and that he is still working out his time at Dartmouth. Hush! here she comes. You will not mind getting up, will you, and standing until she seats herself, and asks you to do so too? You see it pleases her to be like our queen; and, seeing all the grand and solid reality that she lost, why should we not indulge her with dreams and shadows?

One would hardly expect a western Thanksgiving to be celebrated quite as an eastern one is; therefore Mr. R. L. Ketchum's racy description of the rather startling adventure with which a certain California Thanksgiving was enlivened will accord with one's anticipations. The story first appeared in the *Argonaut*.

"SHORTY LOCHINVAR."

I THINK it may be stated, without fear of successful contradiction, that at no period of a man's existence does Cupid's dart strike so deeply and cause so much sleeplessness as at the age of one score, or thereabout. I have known quite a number of young men of about that age to be deeply, passionately, desperately in love, and ultimately to recover and go through similar but less agonizing experiences several times thereafter. But, as I said, they never, in a single instance, suffered half so much from subsequent attacks as from that first experience. Not that they love less, but their capacity for suffering has diminished—which is something to be thankful for, since a man who could suffer at each recurrence of the complaint as much as he did at the first would die of the second or third relapse.

The victim of this first attack is a pitiable creature, particularly when there are "obstacles," which is usually the case.

I always feel very sorry for a chap in this sort of a pickle, and I felt particularly sorry for poor Shorty Fleming. I knew I ought not to encourage him, but he was such a good little beggar, and so much in earnest, that I would have defied a far more severe man than his brother Jack for his sake. Besides, Shorty was not one of the chaps who get over anything easily, and I knew failure would go hard with him. Moreover, Jack was not the only "obstacle." Sam Parker, Shorty's Nettie's papa, also objected. He was not a stern, unreasonable parent, by any means, but his objections, even if presented good-naturedly, were none the less

formidable. Parker was a shrewd Maine Yankee, with a total disbelief in the ability of womankind to use reason, and a record of some sixty years of devotion to an earnest hustle for the fascinating but elusive American dollar. Nettie was the only daughter and the youngest child in a family of seven, and the old man, close-fisted as he was, had spared no expense in educating her liberally. It was only natural, therefore, for him to object, especially as Nettie was barely eighteen, and had only been out of school a few months.

He called on Jack one afternoon, not casually, as he usually called, on his way to or from town, but with a direct purpose. Jack was under the weather, and lay on the sofa. I was reading to him when Parker walked in.

"Howdy, Flemin'; laid up, air ye? Howdy, Faber; purty warm, ain't it? Thanks, I will set a spell." And he sat down on the edge of a chair and began tracing figures on the floor with his big spur. He seemed nervous, and I rose to leave the room, but he waved his hand and said: "Set daown, Faber. Set still. Guess I ain't got nothin' t' say but what ye mout ez well hear."

Here the old man stiffened up in his seat and stated the object of his mission, in a good-natured but thoroughly decided way, closing with:

"Naow, Flemin', I ain't no 'bjection t' th' leetle feller—not one mite; he's a tip-top good boy, an' all that. But 'tain't in reason th't I'm goin' t' spend more'n three thousan' dollars eddicatin' a young 'un, an' then let 'er go an' marry 'nother young 'un 'thout ary red. An' that's what it'll come tew, fust thing we know."

Now, Parker's remarks were in the nature of a revelation to us. Of course we knew Shorty had put in a good many evenings at the Parker ranch, but we had never guessed that his visits there had any significance. A courtship, too, with six big brothers loafing around is a difficult matter. It is easy enough to fall—just fall—in love with a girl if there is no one to hinder. But with six young men, with whom one is on good terms, sitting around and occupying a large portion of one's attention, it is a matter of getting in love, which, ac-

complished, is rather more serious than a mere fall into the same.

Fleming sat up and ran his fingers through his hair, gravely. Then: "I quite agree with you, Mr. Parker. I don't know what to say to Percy, but I will try a little strategy and see if he can be kept at home more. If that won't do, I can talk to him."

And here began my connection with Shorty's love affair. That evening I was writing busily, when some one opened the door of my den and walked in. It was Shorty. He sat down quietly and took up a paper, which he looked at for several minutes, while I scratched away at my work. Then he threw the paper down suddenly, and turned to me with: "Faber, what was old Parker here for to-day?"

I tried to dissemble, but Shorty is nobody's fool, and interrupted: "Oh, rot!" said he; "I reckon you think I'm a sucker. Now, honestly, what was he here for?"

Finally, I told him about the conversation between his brother and Parker. He sat silent for several minutes. I could see his face twitch. Then he turned his eyes to my face and said, slowly: "Faber, I know I'm young and all that, but—I know my own mind. Jack's a good brother and feels in duty bound to take care of me, but I guess I can 'tend to that myself. I—I've made up my mind to marry that girl, if she'll have me, and all the Jacks and Sam Parkers in the world can't stop me." And Mr. Percival Fleming set his mouth hard and walked out. He called at Parker's the next evening, despite Jack's "strategy."

There was another caller at Parker's that evening, in the person of Morris Cottrell, a wealthy rancher from up the "Five-Mile." Shorty, when he got home, mentioned this fact to me, with some feeling in his tones. Cottrell was no old duffer. He was a man of thirty, well-read, and a gentleman, and the prospect of having him for a rival would have sent despair to the heart of any penniless young man less determined than Shorty Fleming.

For two or three months Shorty continued his calls at Parker's, growing more and more gloomy and savage

as the days went by, for old Sam Parker was something of a strategist, and managed to keep the poor lad from getting a single private interview with Nettie, thereby giving Cottrell a clear field, which was evidently satisfactory to the latter, although he did not seem to make much progress.

One evening Shorty came to my room in a state of mind. He had seen Sam Parker that day, and the latter had told him, as gently as possible, some galling truths about his age and his penniless condition, concluding with the cheerful information that he "reckoned Net hed 'bout d'cided t' take up with Cottrell, anyheow."

Of course Shorty was despondent, but he was none the less determined. "Faber, I'm going to see her tomorrow afternoon, and—and ask her."

The time and the hour favored Shorty; but I hardly think Nettie knew her own mind. The boy who came riding slowly home through the shadows next evening was a very much downcast boy, indeed.

He told me all about it, later; how Nettie had wavered, and finally told him that she could give him no answer. She cared a great deal for him, she said, but she was not sure she cared enough for him. Besides, her father objected to him, and she could never cross her father's wishes, when he had done so much for her.

Sam Parker must have heard of this interview, and made up his mind to something. Although he was usually so good-natured, he was as determined as a bull-dog, and I think he used some influence in deciding matters, for, two weeks later, he "dropped in" to tell Jack that Nettie and Cottrell would be married on Thanksgiving Day, two months later.

Shorty must have seen the news in my face, for, after supper, he drew me aside and asked what I knew. I hated to tell him, but did so, the best way I could. The poor lad stood still as stone for several seconds. Then, with a shuddering sob, he turned away. In the morning he was gone, with his horse and clothes, leaving no word.

Jack and Joe, the other brother, were much worried;

but, as Jack now for the first time acknowledged, "the boy could take care of himself."

Jack and I talked it over during the day, and he expressed a good deal of regret, thinking, however, that Nettie had decided for herself, and that Shorty had no one to blame for his failure. "If it had been different," he went on, "and Percy had persevered and won, I would have given in, and I think Parker would too, for next year Percy will come into about fifteen thousand. You see, I've never told him of it, because I wanted him to grow up on his merits and be self-reliant. I think it has been for the best. Joe never knew, until he was of age, that he had anything, and we didn't tell Percy of it then, because he was only seventeen. Joe put his money into the ranch here and kept quiet about it."

He sat silent for a minute, then continued: "Of course, this is between ourselves. But—do you know, I wish the boy had won. He's a good deal of a man, and, now I come to think of it, the affair has hit him hard. They could have waited a couple of years, you know." And Jack walked off, slowly, taking long whiffs at his pipe.

Several weeks passed, during which I saw Nettie Parker several times. She seemed different. Her laugh was not the jolly laugh I had been accustomed to hear, and she seemed pensive at times. Was it her approaching wedding, or—Shorty? I hoped it was Shorty. But, somehow, when people pine, they seem to lose color and get thin, and Nettie Parker did neither. And still no word from Shorty, and the day for the wedding only a week away.

It was Wednesday of Thanksgiving week, and there had been great preparations at Parker's. The people for miles around were invited to the wedding, which, old Sam "'lowed," would be "th' bang-uppest thing they ever hed in th' kentry." I rode into town to buy, on behalf of Jack and myself, something to present to the bride-elect. In the post-office, some one tapped me on the shoulder. I turned. It was Shorty Fleming—Shorty, with a handsome mustache, and smiling quite happily.

"How long before you're going out?" he asked.

"Right now."

"Bully! Faber, go and borrow a horse until to-morrow—tell 'em yours is lame and you'll have to lead him. Nobody has recognized me back of this overcoat-collar, and the hirsute adornment, and I don't want 'em to. I'll walk out and head up the road. Hurry up with the horses."

In about twenty minutes I was following him, riding a horse I had borrowed from my friend the doctor, and leading my own. I soon caught up with Shorty, and we hurried on. Shorty showed me a letter signed "Nettie," and proceeded to unfold a plan he had in mind, which, for the quality of pure "nerve," I had never heard surpassed.

There was nobody at the house but Manuel, the cook, and Shorty soon had him sworn to silence, after which he proceeded to camp in the cold little upstairs storeroom off my den, where nobody could find him. Jack was not to know of his presence, he said, "because Jack is so thundering honest and pernickety, and would squeal or spoil the job."

. . . . . .

The half-hundred guests at Parker's had been enjoying Thanksgiving Day to the full. All of Mrs. Parker's good things had been stowed away where they would do the most good. The minister from town was getting ready for the ceremony, and the guests were bustling about, amid some confusion, trying to find the best points for observation. Nettie Parker, pale for once, stood near the front door, pulling her fingers nervously, waiting, supposedly, for her father.

Some one knocked at the door. Nettie pulled it open, gave a little cry, grabbed a man's hat from the back of a chair and an overcoat from a peg near by, and rushed out, slamming the door. Everybody who saw the performance stood still, dazed. Then, as we heard horses' hoofs clattering up the road, there was a rush for the outside. Up the road, disappearing fast, were two horses, whose riders were evidently in a hurry. There was another rush—this time for the stables—led

by old Sam Parker. But, somehow, the doors would not open. They had been nailed up, very securely, by a person who was at that moment making hypocritical efforts to get one of them open.

When they finally succeeded in mounting two or three men for pursuit, the runaways had three or four miles' start. At this juncture, Cottrell, as cool as if he had never thought of attending his own wedding, came up and spoke quietly to old Parker, who was so dazed that he had not opened his mouth so far.

The old man started. "By gorry, Morris, mebbe thet's c'rect. No use yowlin' over spilt milk. Come on, boys." And they rode off, but not very rapidly.

"I told the old gentleman," remarked Cottrell to me, as we turned toward the house, "that it was no use trying to head them off. They'll be married inside of an hour." Then, in a tone that contained no trace of bitterness, he continued:

"It is far better to have happened now than—than later. And—as it is—I think maybe there will be only one unhappy person, instead of three." That was Morris Cottrell—philosopher and man.

Mr. and Mrs. Percival Fleming were met at the justice's office by old Sam Parker, who remarked: "Wa-al, I swow! Yew air a nervy boy! Ain't ye both ashamed on't?"

No, they were not; and, after Nettie had had a good cry in her father's arms, the runaways were escorted back to the Parker ranch to receive the congratulations of their friends, foremost among whom was Morris Cottrell.

A picture of "ye olden tyme," in an Indian Summer setting, is contained in this quaint love-story, written for ROMANCE by Mira Clark Parsons.

AN INDIAN SUMMER WOOING.

HIRAM STRONG paused at the top of a long hill, to breathe his horse before climbing another just ahead, and looked around over the prospect of wooded slopes and green valleys spread out before him, bathed in the haze of Indian Summer.

Since early morning he had been climbing leisurely from the pretty seminary and factory village where he lived, thirty miles to the eastward, up to the farmhouse among the hills, which was the home of his cousin Josiah. The two middle-aged men kept up a boyish friendship for each other, exchanging visits every fall.

Cattle-show always drew Josiah and some of his family from their hilly retreat, down to the life and bustle of the shire-town where it was held, and then it was easy to drive over to the adjoining town, where the Strongs lived. They had always been house-painters by trade, and Hiram was the last male representative of two families, and a confirmed old bachelor. He owned a pretty home just outside the village, alive with the hum of factories, and the going and coming of seminary boys and girls.

He lived alone with his old mother and sister Jerusha, the widow of his only brother, Nathan. After the death of her husband, four years before, she had shut up the little house across the road and come to live with her mother-in-law.

She was a good housekeeper, "a regular driver," the neighbors said, and at once took the management of affairs, making Hiram and Aunt Thankful, as everybody called her, so comfortable that they wondered how they had ever lived without her. Her cooking was marvellous; her rye-bread, spread with honey,—taken by Hiram every Fall from bee-trees in the woods,—was

ambrosia and nectar; while her pumpkin-pies and quince-preserves were the despair of imitators. The mutual regard of the two women was like that of Ruth and Naomi.

The Strongs' time for visiting was late in the Fall, when the house-painting business was dull, and the long evenings in Cousin Josiah's farmhouse were most enjoyable. This year, Hiram was going alone, as Aunt Thankful was not feeling well, and Jerusha would not leave her.

It had not been a lonely ride, although taken with only old Fan to note his occasional remarks to himself. Through the chestnut woods the nimble squirrels ran, chattering boastfully to each other that they had forestalled the boys in gathering the nuts which the first early frost had loosened from their prickly prisons.

Sometimes the road had lain through level, moist places, where the shy blue gentian, last in the procession of flowers, was raising her fringed lids to the autumn sky, with a pathetic grace unknown to her gay sisters of the summer time. Tufts of milkweed silk and thistle-down clung to the tall dry weeds, while the golden rod stood, with kingly sceptre despoiled of its glory, a ghost of its former self.

At intervals he had heard the raucous grinding of a cider-mill long before the structure itself appeared in sight, with its huge hopper, laboriously filled by a half-grown boy, who was in constant danger of decapitation, if he forgot to duck his head whenever the heavy beam swung round, as the horses trod monotonously about the circle, grinding the apples into pomace. The "cheese," in dimensions equal to that one made of less harmful material, which has rendered the name of Parson Leland famous in that region, would the next day be prepared for the press by the farmer's skilful hands, deftly moulding the mass together with its binding of straw.

The pleasant warmth of mid-day had now given place to the chill of a November evening, and the busy flails, the rhythmic beat of which had sounded all day from open barn-doors along the road, at last were still.

Hiram did not look in the least like a poet. His pleasant gray eyes twinkled above an enormous nose, to which the mouth beneath corresponded in size, but as he glanced over the landscape, he remarked to old Fan, under his breath:

"Reminds me of Aunt Nancy's look, the night she said good-bye to us, kind o' solemn, and far-away; and I declare if that mist rising from the brook there don't look like a Quaker girl, or a spook, I don't know which! Get up, Fan; pull over a few more thank-ye-ma'ams, and you'll get to your provender."

Thus encouraged, Fan started briskly up the last and longest hill, and soon landed her master in the dooryard of the "house behind the woodpile," as a smart boy had once designated it to an inquiring traveller.

A bright light from the open fire shone out through the small-paned windows, across which a curtain was seldom drawn, and a warm welcome from Josiah and his wife awaited the traveller. Cousin Persis was a sweet, lovable woman, who made perpetual sunshine in the home of her husband.

The table was spread for the evening meal. From a tin baker before the fire, the housewife took a cream short-cake, while Harriet, the helpful oldest daughter, raked a pile of potatoes from the ashes, dusting them off with a turkey-wing hanging in the chimney-corner, and kept for this especial purpose. These were placed upon the table, already loaded with rye-and-Indian bread, baked apples and cream, sage-cheese and doughnuts, "light as a puff of empty air," Reuben, the ten-year-old boy, said, quoting from the singing book.

As they gathered around the table, Cousin Hiram was introduced to a little woman who had been sewing busily in the corner, with her foot on the baby's cradle. It was the plump little tailoress, Miss Keziah Waite, whom he had often heard his cousin speak of, as a remarkable woman. Her kindly face was thickly strewn with freckles, from the midst of which shone a pair of brown eyes, flanked on either side by three short, bobbing curls.

While the family are disposing of the short-cake and

potatoes, amid much fun and story-telling, Miss Keziah must be further introduced. She was the good spirit of the small town. Nobody ever meditated birth, death, or marriage, without appealing to her for assistance. She had made the wedding-coat of many a young man whose baby form she had wrapped in its first clothing. She tenderly robed the dead for their last sleep, and the maid for her bridal.

With her press-board, shears and goose, she made her rounds, and no man, not even the minister, ever thought of wearing clothes made by any other hands than hers. The week of her sojourn under a roof was always anticipated with delight by the family. She was in truth a "golden gossip," for although she heard all the news of the town, she never made mischief by telling it, but had a good word for everybody. Her resources were unlimited. She could evolve wonderful moccasins from the cape of an old surtout, and Crazy-Jane hoods out of a grandmother's silk handkerchief. Though she could not sing a note, she delighted the children by repeating old ballads, with a monotonous sing-song which babies mistook for music, and under which they were soothed to sleep so gently that one wondered why she had been denied the joy of motherhood.

After supper they gathered around the hearth, on which stood a milk-pan filled with butternuts waiting to be cracked, and a long Japanned apple-dish heaped with a choice variety of fruit from the bins in the cellar. The leaping flames added their light to that of the two whale-oil lamps set on the stand, illumining the wainscoted walls where Reuben was soon engaged in drawing the silhouettes of the family with Miss Keziah's chalk.

Just as he had given the finishing touch to his mother's profile on the oven door, his father spoke:

"My son, you may bring out Saint John." The broad smile faded from the boy's face, as he lifted a candle and left the room, casting a beseeching glance backward at his sister Harriet, who quickly followed him. They soon returned bringing the remarkable

Saint, the first look at whose face would justify the truth of a statement made years after by the boy grown to man's estate, that his mother never knew how often her cookie-jar was saved from molestation because St. John unwittingly held the post of special policeman in one corner of the same closet.

It was only a harmless bass-viol made years before by Hiram's father, and given to his nephew, who could play well upon it. It was of the usual size of that instrument, but in shape a great black book, with the name "St. John" printed in black letters on a broad red space on the back. The long neck terminated in a grinning black head.

It gave forth delightful strains that evening, the melody of the family concert being augmented by Hiram's voice. Time had been when his father and brother, and Uncle Israel and Aunt Nancy had together made their yearly visit to the farmhouse, when the rafters rang with the music of fugue and anthem. Uncle Israel was a painful stutterer, but his tongue never tripped when he sang the songs of Zion. Now, Hiram came alone.

He sang "Come, my beloved," with his eyes upon the little tailoress sitting opposite in the lamplight, placidly stitching up the long seam of Josiah's Sunday coat sleeve, and a thought was born of the music and entered his head a stranger guest, but by no means unwelcome there. It whispered that he was a lonely man, that his home life was dull and monotonous in comparison with that of his cousin. With him to think was to act, and after the children had been tucked away for the night, and Miss Keziah had made her old-fashioned courtesy and departed also, he shared with Josiah and Persis his new discovery.

This quaint little body was so unlike any other woman whom he had ever met, it rested him to look at her, he said, and a sober strong desire took possession of him to make her his wife.

Cousin Persis was, like most women, a born match-maker; that is, she liked to see people happy; so through the four days' visit the wooing sped rapidly,

and at the end of that time, the woman was his promised wife, and the wedding was to take place very soon.

"We seem to understand each other," he said, "and I don't see any reason why we should wait."

And Miss Keziah, blushing a little under her brown freckles, said:

"I am not one to change my mind, and I am alone in the world."

The brave little soul had taken care of other folks all her life. It was a new and not unpleasant thought that this great, rough-looking, gentle-voiced man wanted to take care of her. On Saturday morning, the coat being finished and pressed off, Miss Keziah took her seat in the thorough-brace wagon of her husband-elect, and they drove off, amid smiles and good wishes, to her home in the Centre, four miles away. The old earth looked very fair that morning to the elderly couple jogging placidly along the winding country road, worn into grooves by heavy wagon-wheels and the feet of horses, while between the ruts the grass grew unmolested.

The birds had left for their southern homes. Only the scream of the blue-jay was heard as he flashed across the path like a fragment dropped from the sky overhead. At the edge of a wood-road, where a bitter-sweet vine waved its bright pennon above them, Keziah exclaimed, "How pretty!" And Hiram stopped the horse, and reaching up his long arms, drew it down, cut off a branch, and awkwardly laid it in her lap, with the remark:

"Seems as though it says, 'Better late than never!'"

Arriving at her house, the little woman timidly invited her companion into the sunny "front room," with its neatly painted floor and braided mats. The fire was already laid, and the tall fellow, stooping down on the red brick hearth, lighted the shavings and fanned the flame into a blaze.

Then they sat, one on either side, and talked over their simple plans. He would stop at the town-clerk's and arrange for the "publishment" to be put up a week

from the morrow. Then, after three weeks, he would come again and they would go to Parson Fulier's, be married, and take their wedding journey to his home.

She timidly asked a few questions:

"Will your mother and sister think it all right?"

"Of course; why not? I am of age."

"Is there a window for house plants?"

"Yes, three of them. Mother's a master hand at making things grow." And Keziah's heart warmed at the thought of having a windowful of flowers, instead of the one pot of dew-plant which she had managed to keep alive by intrusting it to a friendly neighbor in her frequent absences. How nice it would be to stay at home and be taken care of!

She ventured at last on a final question.

"What color do you think my wedding-dress should be?"

Hiram's first perplexed look gave way to a satisfied one as he triumphantly answered, "Just the color of that gray mist we saw rising from the swamp!" And then he said good-bye, and rode off to see the town clerk.

The little tailoress watched him till just as the wagon was rounding a corner, then turned away, saying to herself, "It'll never do to watch him out of sight, it's unlucky."

Old Fan heard a good many remarks on the homeward journey, which came nearer being poetry than her master probably imagined. In that perfect day, beaming with gentle warmth, while Nature smiled as she did at the year's fresh springtime, his heart was beating as "in youthful days," and a vision of the woman whom he had left, presiding over his home, and always meeting him with her cheery smile, was so pleasant unto his mind that he broke forth into song. The old woods rang again, as they echoed back the words:

"Come, my beloved, haste away,
Cut short the hours of thy delay;
Fly like a youthful hart or roe,
Over the hills where spi-i-i-ces grow."

In this ecstatic frame of mind he at length arrived at home.

Meanwhile the two women who composed his household had waited and wondered at the delay. Three days was the time allotted for the annual visit ever since they could remember, and the Strongs were as set in their ways as the ancient Medes and Persians.

The evening after his departure, as they sat by the fire in the hour before bed-time when confidences are easiest, the elder one spoke of a warning she had received that her days were nearly numbered.

"I am thankful that Hiram will not be left alone," she said. "I am sure that you will always be a sister to him, and he will not miss his old mother too much. He has been a good son to me."

"Mother," responded the other quickly, "how long do you think he and I could go on living here without you, and not hear the speech of people? It would never do in the world."

Aunt Thankful looked puzzled and distressed.

"Can't you see some way out of the difficulty?" she asked.

Jerusha was silent for a minute. Then she said,

"What right have I to say anything about it?"

A light began to break into Aunt Thankful's mind.

"You don't mean—?—You think—?—La me! Of course! That would settle the whole thing just right. I declare! I wonder I never thought of it before."

"Thought of what?" inquired her daughter-in-law sharply.

"Why, of your marrying each other, to be sure!"

"Did I say that? I shall not be likely to marry any man till he asks me!"

"Of course not, but, dear me, why don't he think of it? I suppose he's called you sister so long that it's second nature to him. You've always been like a daughter to me, you couldn't seem any nearer,—but I wish——"

"Never mind, mother, what you wish. Neither of us has any call to open anybody's eyes, if anybody can't see anything themselves."

With which slightly ambiguous and wholly ungrammatical speech, the conference was closed, Aunt Thankful soliloquizing as she raked up the fire:

"It beats the Jews! How on earth the man has never thought of taking what Providence has put in his way, I can't see. But then I have been as blind as a bat, myself."

. . . . . .

The living-room had never looked more homelike than it did when Hiram entered it on his return. The brass andirons blinked in the firelight, his mother's welcome was very tender, while sister Jerusha poured his tea, and later seated herself opposite him with a piece of scarlet knitting which he knew her shapely hands were weaving into a comforter for his neck. The warm color set off her dark comeliness to good advantage.

In the light of their welcome and the glow of his own fireside, the scenes of the past few days began to fade into distant perspective, and dwindle in size like objects seen through the wrong end of a spy-glass. Possibly his powers of observation had been quickened, for he thought he saw a new expression in the faces of the two women before whom he sat, screwing up courage to tell them the result of his visit.

Its minor points had been dwelt upon, and his mother began to look sleepy, when, after a brief pause, he plunged into the subject in this wise:

"Josiah has just got a handsome broadcloth coat."

"I want to know!" piped up the old lady with awakened interest. "Get it at Hampton, Cattle-show time?"

"No, had it made at home."

"When?"

"Just finished."

"Ah!" put in Jerusha, "who made it?"

"The same one who makes coats for the whole town."

"What d'ye say his name was?" inquired his mother.

"Her name is Miss Keziah Waite."

(Here Sister Jerusha dropped a whole row of stitches.)

"And mother,—and Jerusha,—she and I have concluded to get married!"

It was long before the days of nitro-glycerine, but almost as powerful a substance seemed to have been exploded, by which Sister Jerusha was thrown suddenly out of the room, and his mother paralyzed. Poor Hiram had by no means calculated upon such a reception of his announcement. He managed to gasp out,

"What under the sun's the matter?"

His mother began to cry.

"I'm nearly through with this troublesome world," she sobbed, "and I did hope Jerusha might close my eyes at last."

"And what's to hinder, I'd like to know? Do you suppose I'm such a brute that I won t make a home for her, as I promised Nathan, as long as I have a roof over my own head?"

His mother wiped her eyes and said:

"How long do you think she'd stay, after you had brought another woman under your roof?"

Hiram's eyes opened wider than they had ever been known to do before.

"Why, mother," he began——

"Yes," she went on, "it's as plain as the nose on your face," ("That's plain enough," interjected her listener), "and if you had not been as blind as a bat, you might have saved yourself a journey of sixty miles, if a wife is what you went for!" (The good soul had forgotten that she had resembled that nondescript animal till very recently.)

"I vum!" remarked her son, and spoke no more that night, but betook himself to bed, and dreamed that three women (the Fates, perhaps) were trying to fit a coat on him, which plainly had not been cut for him in the first place.

He was greatly tumbled up and down in his mind for the next two days. His mother's tears and Sister Jerusha's silence reproached him continually. And the publishment would be put up the next Sabbath-day! His rugged face wore a bewildered expression, and he went about like a man in a dream, trying to find his way out of a labyrinth.

Coming into the house at noon on the third day, he

found his mother alone, who weepingly told him that Jerusha had gone back to her little house over the way.

In just thirty seconds her brother-in-law stood in the room in which he had given his dying brother a sacred promise. No account of the interview was ever reported to the public, but early the next morning a wagon rattled over the frozen road, bearing the almost-bridegroom back to the hill-country. The telegraph was not invented, he would not trust the slow mail, nothing would do but a verbal explanation.

It was not an exhilarating ride. Old Fan looked around several times, puzzled to make out the drift of certain remarks, such as,

"By George! I'd rather face a frowning world, or take the place of old Daniel and be done with it!—Three women taking hold of one man! I wish Nathan had lived,—or I'd put off my visit a week! What a fool I have made of myself!"

In much perturbation of mind he arrived at Josiah's house, where he was received with about equal measure of hospitality and curiosity, Josiah remarking,

"Well, cousin, you are in a hurry, surely. I thought you would wait till the publishment was down."

"Hang the publishment! and me too, if you will! I've got to marry Jerusha! I can't help it. It's foreordained, I suppose. Mother cries all the time, and says it's my duty, and Jerusha is a good housekeeper and I guess I can stand it. I'm dreadful sorry for the other little woman, though."

"You needn't be," spoke up Persis. "She'll be thankful you've changed your mind."

"Bless me! I didn't change it! 'Twas Jerusha!"

"There, there," put in peace-loving Josiah; "I expect it's better to change it now than after the minister had been called in. She won't eat you up (nor cry, neither)," he added parenthetically.

St. John was not taken out of the closet that night. Harps were hung upon the willows, and there was no music.

Only one piece of advice did Josiah offer, "You ought

to make her some money-return for her trouble and disappointment."

"I suppose so," returned the other, "how much damages will she expect, do you think?"

"You ought to give her three hundred dollars, at least," was the prompt reply.

"Whew! I'll have to paint a good many houses to clear that!—but,—I'll do it."

Once more he traversed the familiar wood between the farmhouse and the Centre. It seemed to him that a great change had come over the landscape in one week. A heavy frost had closed the gentian's blue eyes, and they would not open again. Dead leaves had drifted down into the ruts in the grassy pathway, and one old crow cawed overhead.

. . . . . .

The event proved Persis to be right. Miss Keziah's little home, and her comfortable life with her shears, goose, and press-board, had been growing more beautiful in her eyes ever since she had given her promise to Hiram. "An' it's dreadful uncertain," she reflected, "marryin' a settled old bachelor so! They're set in their ways, always." She was glad to be released.

The interview was soon ended, therefore,—but after it the room looked a bit dreary, in spite of a branch of bittersweet which flamed above the little looking-glass between the front windows.

Miss Keziah accompanied Jerusha's brother-in-law to the door, which let in a chill blast as she opened it.

"Winter is going to set in early," said he.

"Yes," she made answer, "Indian summer is over."

The horrible weakness of vanity was never more vividly portrayed than in this powerful sketch by Guy de Maupassant, made into English by V. E. T. for ROMANCE.

MADAME HERMET.

THE insane have for me a peculiar attraction. They dwell in a mysterious realm of fantastical dreams, in that impenetrable cloud of madness, where everything they have seen on earth, everything they have loved, everything they have done, comes to them again in an imaginary existence untrammelled by all the laws that govern events and rule the human mind.

For them, the impossible no longer exists, the improbable disappears, magic is real, and the supernatural familiar. The olden barriers of common-sense logic and reason break, fall and crumble beneath their freed imaginations, escaping, with fabulous leaps which nothing can arrest, to the limitless land of fancy. They make no efforts to control events, overcome resistances or obstacles, for at their whim they can be princes, emperors or gods, can possess all the riches of the world, all the good things of life, enjoy all pleasures, be always strong and comely, eternally young and ever cherished. They only can be happy here below, for, for them, Reality is dead.

I love to bend over their vagrant reason, as one bends over an abyss in whose depths foams an unknown torrent, come from one knows not where and bound one knows not whither.

Still the strangest fancies of madmen are in sane and familiar ideas, strange only because no longer enchained by reason.

Their capricious source fills us with astonishment merely because we have not seen it spout forth. Nevertheless, the insane always interest me, and I constantly seek them out, irresistibly attracted by that commonplace mystery, madness.

So, one day, while visiting one of their asylums, the doctor who was escorting me said:

"Wait. I want to show you an unusually interesting case," and he opened the door of a cell where a woman, about forty years of age, still beautiful, was seated in an arm-chair, and gazed persistently at her features in a hand-glass.

As soon as she perceived us, she rose, ran to the opposite side of the room, picked up a veil and, after carefully covering her face, returned to respond to our greetings by a slight movement of her head.

"Well," said the doctor, "how are you this morning?"

She sighed deeply: "Oh, ill, very ill, sir; there are more marks every day."

He replied decisively:

"No, I assure you that there are not. Indeed, you are mistaken."

She leaned toward him to whisper:

"No, I am sure. I counted ten more pit-holes this morning, three on the right cheek, four on the left, and three, too, on my forehead. It is frightful, frightful! I shall no longer dare to see anyone, not even my son, —no, not even him! Nothing can be done, I am disfigured for life," and, sobbing bitterly, she dropped heavily into her chair.

The doctor seated himself near her, and said in a low, consoling tone:

"Come, show them to me. I know they are not serious. With but a slight cauterization I can efface them all."

She shook her head in denial, but did not speak. He then tried to raise her veil; but she seized it so strongly with both hands that her nails pierced it.

The doctor once more strove to coax and reassure her:

"Come, you know that I always get them away, those ugly marks,—that no one can see them in the least after I have attended to them; but if you will not show them to me, of course I cannot cure you."

She murmured:

"Well, you I do not mind; but I do not know the gentleman who is with you."

"He is also a doctor, who will care for you still better than I."

Then she allowed her face to be uncovered, suffused with blushes from emotion and the shame of being seen. She lowered her eyes, turned her head from side to side to avoid our gaze and stammered:

"Oh, how I suffer at showing myself like this! Horrible, is it not? Horrible?"

I contemplated her with the utmost astonishment, for not the slightest mark, spot or scar was visible on her countenance.

She turned to me, her eyes still lowered, and said:

"It was while taking care of my son that I caught this frightful disease, sir. I saved him, but I am disfigured. I gave him my beauty, poor child! Well! I did my duty, and my conscience is at rest. If I suffer, only God knows it."

The doctor had taken from his pocket a small camel's-hair brush.

"Sit still," said he, "and let me fix those spots."

She turned her right cheek, and he began touching it here and there as lightly as though placing small dots of color. He then treated the left cheek in the same manner; next, the chin and forehead, and exclaimed:

"Look, they are gone, all gone!"

She took up the mirror, contemplated herself fixedly for some moments, with the keenest anxiety, striving, if possible, to discover something; then said with a sigh:

"No, they no longer show much. I thank you infinitely."

The doctor had risen. He bowed to her, showed me out, and following after said, as soon as the door was closed:

"I will tell you that unfortunate woman's cruel history. Her name is Madame Hermet. She was exceedingly beautiful, very coquettish, sincerely beloved and entirely happy. She was one of those women who have nothing in the world but their beauty and the desire to please to sustain, cherish and console them. The constant care of her complexion, her hands, her teeth and

each visible charm occupied every hour and all her attention.

"She became a widow with an only son. The child was brought up as are all children of greatly admired society women; nevertheless, she loved him.

"He grew tall, and she—old. Did she see the fatal crisis approaching? I cannot tell. Did she, like so many others, look each morning for hours at the skin, once so delicate, transparent, and fresh, now beginning to wrinkle a trifle under the eyes, to change beneath a thousand strokes, still imperceptible, but which would grow deeper, day by day and month by month?

"Did she also see increase, slowly but surely, the long forehead-lines, endure the torture, the abominable torture, of the small hand-glass, that one cannot decide to lay down and yet throws angrily aside to seize upon again and view nearer, still nearer, the calm, odious, ravages of approaching old age? Did she lock herself into her bedroom ten or twenty times a day, leaving for no reason the drawing-room and the conversation of friends, to gaze once more on the work of destruction, to view with despair the slow progress of the ill that no one else seems yet to see; but that she, herself, sees so clearly? She knows where the ravages are greatest, the bites of time the deepest. And the glass, the little hand-glass in its graven-silver frame, tells her abominable things, for it seems to speak, to smile, to mock at her whilst it foretells all that is yet to come, all the bodily suffering, and atrocious mental torment which she must undergo until the day of her death, which will be that of her deliverance.

"Did she weep, distracted, upon her knees and pray, pray, pray that One who thus kills human beings, and gives them youth but to make age more unbearable, and lends them beauty but to take it quickly back again, did she pray and supplicate Him to do for her what he has never yet done for any,—to leave her until death her freshness, grace and charm? Then, comprehending that she implored in vain the inflexible Unknown who hastens the years, did she beat her brow, and wring her hands in an agony of silent despair?

"Doubtless she endured all those tortures, for this is what happened:

"One day,—she was then thirty-five years of age,—her son, aged fifteen, fell ill.

"He was confined to his bed before any one could determine the cause of his suffering or its exact nature. A priest, his tutor, watched constantly beside him, while Madame Hermet came morning and evening to see him.

"She would come in the morning in her dressing-gown, smiling and perfumed, and ask even before she passed the door:

"'Well, Georges, are you not better?'

"And the big boy, with his face swollen and red from fever, would reply:

"'Yes, mother dear, a little better.'

"She would remain a few moments in his room, look at the vials of medicine with an expression of disgust, then exclaim suddenly: 'Oh, I've forgotten something very important,' and run quickly out.

"At night, she would appear in a low-cut bodice, in still more of a hurry, for she was always late, and would have but just time to ask:

"'Well, what did the doctor say?'

"The tutor replied:

"'He has not yet decided, madame.'

"At length, one night, the tutor answered: 'Madame, your son has the small-pox.'

"She uttered a cry of terror and fled.

"When her maid entered her bedroom on the morrow, she smelled a strong odor of burned sugar, and found her mistress in bed, trembling with anguish and with cheeks pale from want of sleep. Madame Hermet asked as soon as her blinds were drawn:

"'How is Georges?'

"'Oh! not well at all to-day, madame.'

"She rose at noon, ate only an egg and a cup of tea, as though she had been ill, then went out and learned of a druggist how to guard against contagion from small-pox.

"She returned at dinner-time loaded down with vials,

and went immediately to her room, where she saturated herself and her clothing with disinfectants.

"The tutor awaited her in the dining-room. As soon as she met him, she exclaimed in tones of deepest emotion: 'Well?'

"'Oh, no better. The doctor is very anxious.'

"She began to sob and could eat nothing whatever.

"On the morrow at daybreak she sent to inquire, and, receiving news no more favorable, passed the entire day in her room, where smoked innumerable small braziers that gave forth pungent odors.

"Her servant also stated that she could be heard moaning all night long.

"A week passed thus, during which she did nothing save take the air an hour or two in the afternoon. She asked for news every hour, and wept bitterly each time they were worse.

"On the eleventh day, in the morning, the tutor, having had himself announced, entered her apartment, his face pale and grave, and, refusing to seat himself, said:

"'Madame, your son is much worse and asks to see you.'

"She fell upon her knees and cried:

"'O, my God, my God! I shall never dare! Help me, O, my God!'

"The priest replied:

"'The doctor has little hope, madame, and Georges is waiting for you!'

"Then he left her.

"Two hours later, as the young man grew weaker and again called for his mother, the tutor went once more to her room and found her yet upon her knees, still weeping and repeating:

"'I cannot! I cannot! I am too afraid. I cannot!'

"He strove to persuade, to fortify and decide her; but succeeded only in bringing on an attack of nervous paroxysms of long duration.

"The doctor, having returned toward night, was informed of her cowardice and declared that he would bring her, willing or not.

"But after having exhausted all arguments, as he took hold of her to carry her to her son, she clung to the door with such obstinate grasp that it was impossible to move her.

"Then, when they had abandoned the struggle, she prostrated herself at the physician's feet, calling herself a wretch and begging for pardon.

"'But, oh! he will not die!' she screamed. 'Tell me he will not die! Tell him I love him, worship him!'

"The youth was in the agony of death, and, feeling that he had but a few last moments, he implored them to persuade his mother to come and bid him adieu. With the presentiment which the dying often have, he seemed to know and comprehend all that had taken place, and said:

"'If she fears to enter, beg her just to come by the balcony to my window, that I may at least see her, and bid her good-bye in a look, since I must not kiss her.'

"The doctor and the tutor returned once more to that woman.

"'You incur not the slightest risk,' they declared, 'for there will be a window-pane between you and him.'

"She consented, covered her head, took up a bottle of smelling-salts, and made three steps upon the balcony, then, suddenly, hiding her face in her hands she moaned:

"'No, no. I dare not see him,—never—I am too ashamed,—too afraid, no, I cannot!'

"They tried to drag her, but she clutched the rails in desperation, and groaned so piteously that she attracted the attention of passers-by in the street below.

"And the dying boy still waited, his eyes turned toward that window, for a last look at the sweet face of his dearly-beloved mother.

"He waited long and night came. Then he turned his face to the wall and spoke no more.

"When day broke he was dead.

"On the morrow, she was insane."

Those who love to laugh should not fail to read this almost painfully amusing story. It is translated for ROMANCE, from the German of Hans Arnold, by Lloyd Temple, and emphasizes, not unpleasantly, some of the differences between German and American social customs.

THE CALL BEFORE THE BALL.

We had been married about half a year. My husband had accepted a call to the University of B—— as Professor "Extraordinarius," and was laboring with unflagging diligence on an extensive scientific work, which we fondly expected to be the means of making of him an "Ordinarius." He was completely absorbed in his work. As for me, I had been brought up in the country, had never known much of so-called amusements, and considered it quite natural therefore that my life in town should also pass on quietly and without variety. And, as I have just said, I was newly married. House-keeping and managing had still all the charms of novelty, and, besides, the pride I felt in my learned husband, who, engrossed with his work, had no time to think about frivolities, sustained me not a little.

In short, I had almost forgotten that I was only nineteen years old. If my feet sometimes grew restless when the *Wachtparade* near by played a pretty waltz or a gay galop, I considered it a remnant of youthful folly in me, which, in my position as the wife of a professor, I could not get rid of quickly enough.

The first year of our marriage was passed in this laudable manner, and no doubt the tide of our lives would have flowed on in the same channel if a change had not taken place in me through an outward change in our circumstances. A brother of my husband, also newly married, and just as gay and fond of society as my dear husband was sober, absent-minded and reserved, was transferred to B—— as Assessor and, as was natural, the most animated and delightful intimacy was soon established between our two families. Anna, my

sister-in-law, a beautiful and elegant woman, an officer's daughter, soon understood the state of affairs in our house.

In the very first week of our sisterly intercourse, she had persuaded me to bang my hair and get a new hat, —(it is true without my dear husband's even noticing it, which provoked me not a little), and she assured us both on every possible occasion that it was a shame to hide ourselves behind folios and tobacco smoke as we did. She said that I lived like a nun. At nineteen one should desire to see people and be seen.

But my husband declined every invitation to enter into outside gayeties, playfully at first and then so seriously that I became alarmed and gave my sister-in-law a hint to let the matter drop. "We can get along as it is," I added with a faint sigh.

But the tinder must have been in my soul; the first tiny spark had fallen into it, and if the flame of rebellion did not yet leap up openly, it was already smoldering.

One morning—it was a most disagreeable day in the latter part of November—I had gone to market early and had done some shopping. As was natural in such bad weather and for going to market, I had put on my oldest clothes. I wore large rubber boots, lined woollen gloves and a winter cloak which I had had ever since I was confirmed, and which I had sadly outgrown in the meanwhile.

At a corner, I met my sister-in-law, who, with the man-servant carrying several bundles behind her, seemed also to have been out shopping.

She approached me rapidly.

"Lisa, please do me a favor and go to the florist's with me. We have just received the invitation to the *Oberpräsident's* big ball. I want to give another order, and you, too, of course. You received your invitation when we did ours, did you not?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "*We!*" I said somewhat bitterly, "what are you thinking of? Robert does not wish to pay any calls this winter, hardly on his colleagues; he is up to his ears in his work on Mortgage Law."

"Indeed?" exclaimed my sister-in-law indignantly. "Well, let him work, and you amuse yourself. I declare, Lisa, you will live to see—excuse me for saying it—that you are allowing your husband to become an egotist. At the next exhibition for those creatures he will get the first prize!"

I began to reflect. There was surely something in what Anna said.

"Do you want to make me believe that you wouldn't like to go to the ball?" Anna proceeded indignantly. "Just say so—and I give you up!"

"No," I replied, honestly. "I would like to go—very much. But I can't force it, can I? How shall I persuade Robert to make a formal call on the *Oberpräsident?* You don't know him, Anna!"

My sister-in-law looked down reflectively for a moment, then raised her head.

"Lisa, have you courage?" she asked.

I hesitated. "I don't know whether I have or not," I said.

"Well, I have—enough for both of us, if necessary," she explained decidedly. "I have thought of something, and you are going to do it. Have you any visiting-cards with you?"

I took out my card-case. "Yes," I said surprised, "some of mine and Robert's."

"Splendid!" answered my sister-in-law, well satisfied, as she beckoned a slowly approaching cab. "Onward now with courage."

And before I knew what I was about, we both sat in the carriage,—the servant on the driver's seat. "To the *Oberpräsident's*," ordered Anna, and on we drove.

"But Anna, Anna," I cried, "please listen. What are you going to do? I certainly can't go to the *Oberpräsident's* in this costume, and, above all, without Robert."

"And you are not going to," answered my sister-in-law coolly. "We will only stop at the door and send up your and your husband's cards. The *Oberpräsidentin* will not receive us,—and a week from to-day we will vie with each other in dancing at her ball, in pink silk

and wild roses—and Robert for once will write three pages less on the Mortgage Law. That will be good for him, and for posterity, too."

I was so dumfounded at this daring plan that I only sat silent, wringing my hands, not to the advantage of my gloves. One of them resented such treatment and burst, which did not add to the elegance of my appearance. Every protestation I might have made—should have made, perhaps—was silenced by the force of facts, for the cab now stopped at the gorgeous house of the new *Oberpräsident*, into which he had recently moved. His brilliant entertainment was for the purpose of celebrating his establishment in his new home.

The servant received the cards, as became him, without showing by a sign that he was conscious of the fact that the Herr Professor whom he was to announce was not in the carriage at all, and disappeared in the vestibule.

My sister-in-law embraced me joyously. "Capital!" she cried laughing immoderately. "Robert is now paying his respects to Her Excellency without in the least suspecting it,—and we will confront him with the accomplishment of the fact and with the dressmaker's bill."

I, too, now that nothing could be changed, had become very animated. The servant came back and we were on the point of giving the driver the signal to start, when John with his hat in his hand stepped nearer and opened the door.

"Her Excellency will be happy to see you," he said in a solemn voice.

Anna and I stared at each other in speechless horror. I clutched her hand convulsively. "Anna!" I gasped, turning pale. My sister-in-law looked about her as if in search of help. She, too, did not seem to feel well.

"Give me your gloves at least!" I exclaimed in despair, tearing off my ripped market-gloves.

The servant, in the mean while, was still standing at the door, immovable, like a stuffed diplomat, and was waiting for further developments.

Suddenly Anna seemed to have come to a conclusion.

"Go up again immediately," she commanded, "and say that we beg a thousand pardons,—but the Frau Professor has suddenly been seized with a fainting-spell and is unable to leave the carriage."

The servant, a faint smile flitting over his faultless mask, again disappeared in the doorway. At the same moment Anna called to the driver, "Drive on!"

The unhappy man, however, had noticed something out of order in the harness and, with a laconic "Immediately," he crawled from his perch and began buckling around the horse with maddening composure and conscientiousness.

Shivering with impatience and fear, we sat watching him—to go away on foot was of course out of the question. At last—at last, he was through, and made a sign of climbing back to his seat. But now—oh, horror! the front door was opened, and with a fur cloak thrown over her arm appeared a small, very kind-looking lady, accompanied by our servant, and approached our cab with rapid steps,—Her Excellency in her own sympathetic person.

Anna, grasping and mastering the situation with lightning rapidity, whispered to me, "I am you, and you are my maid," and sank down in the corner of the carriage, her handkerchief over her eyes, while I, happy that, looking as I did, such an inferior part was given me to play, busied myself about her with an imaginary scent-bottle.

Her kind Excellency, whose reputation for a good heart and great curiosity had preceded her, had beckoned our servant in the meanwhile, who, to my indignation, I saw convulsed with laughter behind her back.

Her Excellency in the most gracious way insisted that my sister-in-law—whom she took for me—should get out.

"No, indeed, my dear Frau Professor," she said with really charming kindness, which we certainly should have appreciated much more in any other situation, "I will *not* let you leave in this condition under any circumstances. You must come up with me for a little

while until you have recovered. But where is your husband?"

My knees began to tremble—the situation was getting more and more complicated.

"My husband has gone to the drug store to get me the drops I take in such cases," Anna gasped in a dying voice. "My maid has therefore stayed with me."

"Well, he must be back soon, then," said the *Oberpräsidentin.* "Your maid"—to my silent indignation the worthy lady did not for a moment doubt the genuineness of "the maid,"—"will stay here and tell your husband what has become of you. No excuses, my dear Frau Professor. You must let me give you a glass of wine. I will not let you go."

All of Anna's protestations were of no avail. She had to get out, and, supported on the arms of the grinning servant and her kind Excellency, she staggered up the steps in the deadliest embarrassment, but in a state of the most perfect health.

Fortunately she did not look back. If she had, in spite of all our trouble, I should have laughed, even under the penalty of death.

But when the strange procession had disappeared in the house, my situation oppressed me heavily. Here I was, waiting for "the husband," and unless he were spirited here by magic, there was no reason in the world why I should not be sitting here a year from to-day, in case the horse and driver did not tire of the situation in the meanwhile.

I must do something—that was clear. Necessity in this case was the mother of an idea—the husband must be brought here.

I called out our street and number to the driver and, promising him a princely fee, begged him to drive as fast as his horses could go. Away we went for the second time on this memorable day.

I do not know, to this hour, how I ever got up the steps and into our rooms. I tugged at the bell so that it was heard all over the house, rushed into the hall, into the study, which was always avoided at this time of day like Bluebeard's Chamber, left the door of the

sanctum wide open against all rule and order, and cried, "Robert! your dress coat—your stove-pipe hat —your gloves — quick — our whole livelihood is at stake!"

Robert stared at me with wide-open eyes. Torn from the peaceful atmosphere of his work into the whirlwind of events, he was fortunately so bewildered that he let me stuff him into his dress-coat like a puppet. He assured me afterward that he had had a feeling as if a cyclone had overtaken and shaken him —but as I gave him no chance to speak, but cried over and over again, "Quick! Quick!" he followed me as quietly as a lamb,—a lamb in a high hat and light gloves!

Arrived at the door, I beat my head. "The drops!" I cried, and rushed back again to my husband's desk. I seized the first bottle which came into my hands,—a crime I should never have been guilty of under normal conditions,—and flew after him. He had stopped on the steps, and was looking helplessly after me.

"Lisa, if I may be permitted one modest question,— where am I going?"

"Into the cab!" I replied with the last remnant of my breath—and only after we had galloped past two streets, could I recover myself sufficiently to describe the situation to him in short, breathless words, and to make it clear to him that he must play the part of Anna's husband for a while, and pity and console her in a nervous attack.

Robert was much too bewildered and dumfounded to reproach me for our mad prank. He really opened his mouth only three times, much to my gratification, of course, during the whole drive, and then only to say to himself, shaking his head, "Strange!"

Without looking at each other, we mounted the staircase to the *Oberpräsident's* house. On every third step, I repeated to my absent-minded husband, "I am your wife's maid!" which information he received with a kind "Indeed?"—but whether he would think of all the necessary consequences following from my statement remained to be seen. Suddenly I remembered something.

I stopped. "Robert," I whispered anxiously, "is red ink poisonous?"

Robert looked at me suspiciously. The thought that something might be wrong with me mentally, a thought which, as he confessed to me later, had come to him several times that morning, seemed to be gaining ground in his mind.

"No," he gently said. "Did you drink some?"

I shook my head and hurried on. The bottle which I had taken with me contained the above-mentioned liquid, and it was this which must play the part of the nerve-quieting drops. When we were ushered into Her Excellency's parlors, I, as maid, walking meekly behind my master, Anna was still lying in a languishing attitude on the sofa. Around her were grouped a scent-bottle, a glass of Cape wine, a fan, a box of powders. Her Excellency stood by, consoling her.

At our entrance an expression of uncontrollable mirth flitted over the patient's face. With kind intentions it might have been construed into a nervous twitching.

"Well, my dear Herr Professor," Her Excellency called to us, again all condescension and kindness, "here you are at last with the longed-for drops."

Robert looked about him wildly.

"Drops?" he repeated.

"Here, Herr Professor," I quickly interposed, "I have the bottle."

Her Excellency, holding a silver-crested teaspoon, seemed determined to complete her Samaritan work, and after the principle "Much helps much!" she poured out a considerable quantity of the medicine and was about to put it to Anna's mouth with the kind remark, "There, that will help you." But Anna faintly waved her away, "Only ten drops," she whispered. With a polite "Her Excellency will permit me," I now assumed the task of dropping the medicine so that the worthy lady might not discover the label "Red Ink," which had fortunately escaped her at the first glance. The ten drops, which I measured charitably and scantily, had to be swallowed. They had a truly

magical effect, for Anna found herself almost immediately able to stand on her feet. She expressed a thousand thanks, and Her Excellency assured her that she should be most pleased to see the patient, fresh and well, at her ball,—"For of course we may hope to see you here?" she added turning to Robert, who gave me a dagger's look and muttered something unintelligible. He told me afterward it was "The Devil!" but on account of the greater probability it was interpreted by her Excellency as "Delighted, etc." Under this volley of repeated thanks and polite phrases, we withdrew, and when we were once more safe in our cab, which had certainly fared best in this adventure, Anna and I began to laugh as never before and never afterward—as immoderately as one really only laughs when one is nervous—as was the case with us.

My poor husband in his dress coat and high hat meanwhile sat on the back seat and looked alternately at his wife and his sister-in-law. I believe that he would have liked to give us a lecture now, but we afforded him no chance to speak and ourselves no chance to breathe. When one of us had just dried her last tears of laughter, the other had only to look at her, or to say "The drops!" when we would begin again. The cab-driver, who must all along have been wondering what was the matter with us, looked down at us every few moments with a beaming face. He certainly did not often have such entertaining passengers.

"And now you must go home with me," Anna cried at last. "You must take dinner with us. For in the first place we don't want to end this day in a commonplace way—and then I am too anxious about you, Lisa. Your Bluebeard will certainly swallow you if you are left alone with him."

We laughed anew. My husband, who faintly ejaculated, "Mortgage Laws," was overruled, and we drove on to our sister-in-law's in the merriest mood.

My brother-in-law, who was just as jolly as his wife, brought up champagne in order to celebrate Robert's compulsory formal call, and Robert himself grew quite merry and granted a general pardon. He thought that

I had sufficiently atoned for my or rather Anna's mad prank, in the great anxiety I had endured.

The dinner might and really should have ended our story—but we were not to escape so lightly.

When we had grown a little more composed and were discussing the affair over our coffee, Rudolph, my brother-in-law, who was smoking in a rocking-chair, suddenly said very seriously: "Well, children, how do you expect this thing to turn out?"

"What do you mean?" asked Robert, while we listened intently. The question surprised us.

"I mean this," said Rudolph, lifting himself out of his comfortable position. . "That I consider the whole affair very harmless and funny, and I think it would have been a splendid joke if it had been good enough to take its course according to the programme."

"But?" his wife interposed breathlessly.

"But as it didn't—as, moreover, Chance has once more played one of its mean tricks—there is nothing left for all of us to do, according to my opinion, but to give up the ball on some plausible excuse. Otherwise, the affair might have a very stupid epilogue, for which, as far as it concerns me, I am not at all anxious."

"I do not understand you," cried Anna impatiently. "Come, out with the facts—or be silent."

"Very well," said Rudolph. "Let us have the facts then. Their Excellencies, as is the custom of Excellencies, will immediately return the call you paid them, but will manage more skilfully than you did. The day after the invitation to their ball for Herr and Frau Professor arrives,—so far, very good. But now let us proceed!"

"Quick, quick!" I cried, almost dying with impatience.

"Everything in time!" Rudolph calmly continued. "Well, we go to the ball——"

"Very true!" Anna added emphatically.

"We enter. Her Excellency, clothed in dove-gray silk and graciousness, advances to receive us. We smile and bow. With the memory all high personages cultivate for faces, she sees the fainting Frau Professor

of this morning on the arm of an Assessor. Soon afterward she sees the Professor glide in, escorting his maid. An explanation is unavoidable."

"Well, and what if it is?" interrupted his wife, but with not quite so much assurance as before. "Her Excellency seems to be so kind-hearted that, when the explanation is made, she will no doubt consider the whole affair very funny."

"I regret that I cannot agree with you for once," said Rudolph. "In the first place, people in the position of the *Oberpräsident's*, who have to welcome about five hundred guests, are not at all anxious to converse longer than is absolutely necessary with each one. And then,—Her Excellency may be an angel, a saint, anything you like, but that is no reason why His Excellency should be one. Now put down the fact that he is my Chief, add up the whole story and subtract the deficit. I have spoken!" He threw himself back in his chair and resumed his smoking. We two culprits looked at each other as if cold water had been thrown on us.

"You may be right!" Anna said in a low voice.

"This follows from this," remarked Robert, "and now, little wife, come home. I have to make up for a great deal of lost time, and you have been gone since ten o'clock."

These words, spoken in a solemn tone, reminded me of my shamefully neglected duties. Anna and I parted from each other in very low spirits, and only Robert was triumphant over the fact that, according to the old proverb, in digging a pit for our neighbor we had fallen in ourselves.

The next day, as Rudolph had prophesied, Herr and Frau *Oberpräsident* drove up, or rather their carriage did. The servant delivered their cards, and left so hurriedly that it seemed as though he were afraid we should revenge ourselves and say to him, "Herr and Frau Professor will be happy to see their Excellencies." And the next day, while we were at lunch, the invitation to the ball was handed us, and with it a dainty note. I anxiously opened the envelope—and was over-

come with shame. Her amiable Excellency in sympathetic terms inquired after the health of the Frau Professor and begged that she would let her know how she was, through her servant. I sat silent, the letter in my hand, my heart beating remorsefully. To reply to this kind attention with another deception seemed shameful to me. I told the servant that I would send my answer later, and as Robert did not know how to advise me, I went to Anna's to inform her of the circumstances and to come to some conclusion. I found Anna and her husband both at home, and, with a laconic "Read!" handed them the *Oberpräsidentin's* note. They scanned it together with feverish interest.

"Well," said Anna and let the note drop, "if that woman has no wings, it is a mistake of nature. She has missed her vocation as an angel."

"Yes, that's what I say, too!" I agreed heartily. "But what are we going to do? Shall we lie again out of gratitude? I can't do it. We never shall get out of this! It is enough to drive one distracted."

We all three looked at each speechlessly. Finally Anna broke the silence. "Ah, well!" she cried in a decided manner. "We will put an end to the matter, or we shall never have any peace. Lisa, you and I will drive to the *Oberpräsident's* again, but this time with the positive intention of being received, and confess to her Excellency, woefully and repentantly, our merry prank from beginning to end. That is the only way out of the difficulty."

Rudolph looked rather anxious. "The chief" still seemed to have his horrors for him.

"Well, Rudolph," I asked timidly, "shall we?"

He glanced up at this, looked at us both and laughed. "As far as I am concerned, you may," he said. "But do it simply and naturally. She won't be so dreadful, after all. Excellencies have been young once, too."

And so it turned out. After we had endured on the way there in a ten-fold degree the feelings one has in a dentist's waiting-room with a hopelessly lost tooth, everything went very well,—much better than we deserved.

The *Oberpräsidentin* was much too kind-hearted not to have pity on us in our painful embarrassment. She met us half-way in our confession. We finally chatted with her quite a while about all sorts of charitable societies, of which she was the energetic and efficient superintendent, and we parted from her with a feeling of genuine gratitude for her leniency and kindness, which seemed all the nicer in proportion as we had the less reason to expect it.

On our way home, it is true, we calculated that we each had become a member of at least six societies, but we gladly paid this price for our folly. From the moral standpoint, our husbands ought now not to have allowed us to go to the ball, but from the standpoint of common sense they did. We enjoyed ourselves immensely, and danced until late at night. And, when one of our good friends, who had noticed the somewhat meaning smile on the face of Her Excellency when she greeted us, said to us very respectfully, "The *Oberpräsidentin* was very gracious indeed to you," my sister-in-law answered with great dignity, "Oh, that was on account of previous relations between us."

"Ah!" said the lady.

Mr. Julian Hawthorne excels—an inherited quality—in stories containing a glimpse of the supernatural. Here is one of the best that he has done in this line. It first appeared in *Belgravia.*

MY FRIEND PATON.

MATHEW MORRISS, my father, was a cotton merchant in Liverpool twenty-five years ago—a steady, laborious, clear-headed man, very affectionate and genial in his private intercourse. He was wealthy, and we lived in a sumptuous house in the upper part of the city. This was when I was about ten years old. My father was twice married; I was the child of the first wife, who died when I was very young; my stepmother came five years later. She was the elder of two sisters, both beautiful women. The sister often came to visit us. I remember I liked her better than I liked my stepmother; in fact, I regarded her with that sort of romantic attachment that often is developed in lads of my age. She had golden brown hair and a remarkably sweet voice, and she sang and played in a manner that transported me with delight; for I was already devoted to music. She was of a gentle and impulsive temperament, easily moved to smiles and tears; she seemed to me the perfection of womankind, and I made no secret of my determination to marry her when I grew up. She used to caress me, and look at me in a dreamy way, and tell me I was the nicest and handsomest boy in the world. "And as soon as you are a year older than I am, John," she would say, "you shall marry me, if you like."

Another frequent visitor at our house at this time was not nearly so much a favorite of mine. This was a German, Adolf Körner by name, who had been a clerk in my father's concern for a number of years and had just been admitted junior partner. My father placed every confidence in him, and often declared that he had the best idea of business he had ever met with. This may very likely have been the fact; but to me he

appeared simply as a tall, grave, taciturn man, of cold manners, and speaking with a slight German accent, which I disliked. I suppose he was about thirty-seven years of age, but I always thought of him as older than my father, who was fifty. Another and more valid reason for my disliking Körner was that he was in the habit of paying a great deal of attention to my lady-love, Miss Juliet Tretherne. I used to upbraid Juliet about encouraging his advances, and I expressed my opinion of him in the plainest language, at which she would smile in a preoccupied way, and would sometimes draw me to her and kiss me on the forehead. Once she said, "Mr. Körner is a very noble gentleman; you must not dislike him." This had the effect of making me hate him all the more.

One day I noticed an unusual commotion in the house, and Juliet came downstairs attired in a lovely white dress, with a long veil, and fragrant flowers in her hair. She got into a carriage with my father and stepmother, and drove away. I did not understand what it meant, and no one told me. After they were gone I went into the drawing-room, and, greatly to my surprise, saw there a long table covered with a white cloth and laid out with a profusion of good things to eat and drink in sparkling dishes and decanters. In the middle of the table was a great cake covered with white frosting: the butler was arranging some flowers round it.

"What is that cake for, Curtis?" I asked.

"For the bride, to be sure," said Curtis without looking up.

"The bride! who is she?" I demanded in astonishment.

"Your aunt Juliet, to be sure!" said Curtis composedly, stepping back and contemplating his floral arrangement with his head on one side.

I asked no more, but betook myself with all speed to my room, locked the door, flung myself on the bed, and cried to heartbreaking with grief, indignation, and mortification. After a very long time some one tried the door, and a voice—the voice of Juliet—called to me. I made no answer. She began to plead with me;

I resisted as long as I could, but finally my affection got the better of my resentment, and I arose and opened the door, hiding my tear-stained face behind my arm. Juliet caught me in her arms and kissed me: tears were running down her own cheeks. How lovely she looked!

My heart melted, and I was just on the point of forgiving her when the voice of Körner became audible from below, calling out "Mrs. Körner!" I tore myself away from her and cried passionately, "You don't love me! you love him! go to him!" She looked at me for a moment with a pained expression; then she put her hand in the pocket of her dress and drew out something done up in white paper. "See what I have brought you, you unkind boy," said she. "What is it?" I demanded. "A piece of my wedding-cake," she replied. "Give it to me!" said I. She put it in my hand; I ran forward to the head of the stairs, which Körner was just ascending, dashed the cake in his face, and then rushed back to my own room, whence neither threats nor coaxing availed to draw me forth for the rest of the day.

I never saw Juliet again. She and her husband departed on their wedding-trip that afternoon; it was to take them as far as Germany, for Körner said that he wished to visit his father and mother, who were still alive, before settling down permanently in Liverpool. Whether they really did so was never discovered. But, about a fortnight later, a dreadful fact came to light. Körner—the grave and reticent Körner—whom everybody trusted and thought so highly of—was a thief, and he had gone off with more than half my father's property in his pocket. The blow almost destroyed my father, and my stepmother too, for that matter; for at first it seemed as though Juliet must have been privy to the crime. This, however, turned out not to have been the case. Her fate must have been all the more terrible on that account; but no news of either of them ever came back to us, and my father would never take any measures to bring Körner to justice. It was several months before he recovered from the shock sufficiently to take up business again; and then the Ameri-

can civil war came and completed his ruin. He died, a poor and broken-down man, a year later. My step-mother, who was really an admirable woman, realized whatever property remained to us, took a small house, and sent me to an excellent school, where I was educated for Cambridge. Meanwhile I had been devoting all possible time to music; for I had determined to become a composer, and I was looking forward, after taking my degree, to completing my musical education abroad; but my mother's health was precarious, and when the time came, she found herself unequal to making the journey and the change of habits and surroundings that it implied. We lived very quietly in Liverpool for three or four years; then she died, and after I had settled our affairs, I found myself in possession of a small income and alone in the world. Without loss of time I set out for Europe.

I went to a German city, where the best musical training was to be had, and made my arrangements to pass several years there. At the bankers', when I went to provide for the regular receipt of my remittances, I met a young American, by name Paton Jeffries. He was from New England, and, I think, a native of the State of Connecticut; his father, he told me, was a distinguished inventor, who had made and lost a considerable fortune in devising a means of promoting sleep by electricity. Paton was studying to be an architect, which, he said, was the coming profession in his country; and it was evident, on a short acquaintance, that he was a fellow of unusual talents—one of those men of whom you say that, come what may, they are always sure to fall on their feet. For my part, I have certainly never met with so active and versatile a spirit. He was a year or so older than I, rather tall than short, lightly but strongly built, with a keen, smiling, subtle face, a finely-developed forehead, light wavy hair, and gray eyes, very penetrating and bright. There was a pleasing kind of eagerness and volubility in his manner of talking, and a slight imperfection, not amounting to a lisp, in his utterance, which imparted a naïve charm to his speech. He used expressive and rapid gestures

with his hands and arms; and there was a magnetism, a fascination, about the whole man that strongly impressed me. I was at that period much more susceptible of impressions, and prone to yield to them, than I am now. Paton's rattling vivacity, his knowledge of the world, his entertaining talk and stories, his curiosity, enterprise, and audacity, took me by storm; he was my opposite in temperament and character, and it seemed to me that he had most of the advantages on his side. Nevertheless, he professed, and I still believe he felt, a great liking for me; and we speedily came to an agreement to seek a lodging together. On the second day of our search, we found just what we wanted.

It was an old house, in the outskirts of the town, standing by itself, with a small garden behind it. It had formerly been occupied by an Austrian baron, and it was probably no less than 200 years old. The baron's family had died out, or been dispersed, and now the venerable edifice was let, in the German fashion, in separate floors or étages, communicating with a central staircase. Some alterations rendered necessary by this modification had been made, but substantially the house was unchanged. Our apartment comprised four or five rooms on the left of the landing and at the top of the house, which consisted of three stories. The chief room was the parlor, which looked down through a square bow window on the street. This room was of irregular shape, one end being narrower than the other, and nearly fitting the space at this end was a kind of projecting shelf or mantelpiece (only, of course, there was no fireplace under it, open fireplaces being unknown in Germany) upon which rested an old cracked looking-glass, made in two compartments, the frame of which, black with age and fly-spots, was fastened against the wall. The shelf was supported by two pilasters; but the object of the whole structure was a mystery; so far as appeared, it served no purpose but to support the looking-glass, which might just as well have been suspended from a nail in the wall. Paton, I remember, betrayed a great deal of curiosity about it: and since the consideration of the problem was more in his line

of business than in mine, I left it to him. At the opposite end of the room stood a tall earthenware stove. The walls were wainscoted five feet up from the dark polished floor, and were hung with several smoky old paintings of no great artistic value. The chairs and tables were plain, but very heavy and solid, and of a dark hue like the room. The window was nearly as wide as it was high, and opened laterally from the centre on hinges. The other rooms were of the same general appearance, but smaller. We both liked the place, and soon made ourselves very comfortable in it. I hired a piano, and had it conveyed upstairs to the parlor; while Paton disposed his architectural paraphernalia on and in the massive writing-table near the window. Our cooking and other household duties were done for us by the wife of the portier, the official corresponding to the French concierge, who, in all German houses, attends at the common door, and who, in this case, lived in a couple of mussy little closets opening into the lower hall, and eked out his official salary by cobbling shoes. He was an old, grotesque humorist, of most ungainly exterior, black-haired and bearded, with a squint, a squab nose, and a short but very powerful figure. Dirty he was beyond belief, and he was abominably fragrant of vile tobacco. For my part, I could not endure this fellow; but Paton, who had much more of what he called human nature in him than I had, established friendly relations with him at once, and reported that he found him very amusing. It was characteristic of Paton that, though he knew much less about the German language than I did, he could understand and make himself understood in it much better; and when we were in company, it was always he who did the talking.

It would never have occurred to me to wonder, much less to inquire, who might be the occupants of the other étages; but Paton was more enterprising, and before we had been settled three days in our new quarters, he had gathered from his friend the portier, and from other sources, all the obtainable information on the subject. The information was of no particular interest,

however, except as regarded the persons who dwelt on the floor immediately below us. They were two—an old man and a young woman, supposed to be his daughter. They had been living here several years—from before the time, indeed, that the portier had occupied his present position. In all these years the old man was known to have been out of his room only twice. He was certainly an eccentric person, and was said to be a miser, and extremely wealthy. The portier further averred that his property—except such small portion of it as was invested and on the income of which he lived—was realized in the form of diamonds and other precious stones, which, for greater security, he always carried, waking or sleeping, in a small leathern bag, fastened round his neck by a fine steel chain. His daughter was scarcely less a mystery than he, for, though she went out as often as twice or thrice a week, she was always closely veiled, and her figure was so disguised by the long cloak she wore that it was impossible to say whether she were graceful or deformed, beautiful or ugly. The balance of belief, however, was against her being attractive in any respect. The name by which the old miser was known was Kragendorf; but, as the portier sagaciously remarked, there was no knowing, in such cases, whether the name a man bore was his own or somebody else's.

This Kragendorf mystery was another source of apparently inexhaustible interest to Paton, who was fertile in suggestions as how it might be explained or penetrated. I believe he and the portier talked it over at great length, but, so far as I am aware, without arriving at any solution. I took little heed of the matter, being now fully absorbed in my studies; and it is to be hoped that Herr Kragendorf was not of a nervous temperament, otherwise he must have inveighed profanely against the constant piano-practice that went on over his head. I also had a violin, on which I flattered myself I could perform with a good deal of expression, and by and by, in the long still evenings—it was November, but the temperature was still mild—I got into the habit of strolling along the less-frequented streets,

with my violin under my shoulder, drawing from it whatever music my heart desired. Occasionally I would pause at some convenient spot, lean against a wall, and give myself up to improvisation. At such times a little cluster of auditors would gradually collect in front of me, listening for the most part silently, or occasionally giving vent to low grunts and interjections of approval. One evening, I remember, a young woman joined the group, though keeping somewhat in the background; she listened intently, and after a time gradually turned her face toward me, unconsciously as it were; and the light of a street lamp at a little distance revealed a countenance youthful, pale, sad, and exquisitely beautiful. It impressed me as with a vague reminiscence of something I had seen or imagined—some pictured face, perhaps, caught in a glance and never to be identified. Her eyes finally met mine; I stopped playing. She started, gave me an alarmed look, and gliding swiftly away, disappeared. I could not forget this incident; it haunted me strangely and persistently. Many a time thereafter, I revisited the same spot, and drew together other audiences, but the delicate girl with the dark blue eyes and the tender sensitive mouth was never again among them.

It was at this epoch, I think, that the inexhaustible Paton made a discovery. From my point of view it was not a discovery of any moment; but as usual, he took interest in it enough for both of us. It appeared that, in attempting to doctor the crack in the old looking-glass, a large piece of the plate had got loose, and come away in his hands; and in the space behind he had detected a paper, carefully folded and tied up with a piece of faded ribbon. Paton was never in the habit of hampering himself with fine-drawn scruples, and he had no hesitation in opening the folded paper and spreading it out on the table. Judging from the glance I gave it, it seemed to be a confused and abstruse mixture of irregular geometrical figures and cramped German chirography. But Paton set to work upon it with as much concentration as if it had been a recipe for the Philosopher's Stone; he reproduced the

lines and angles on fresh paper, and labored over the writing with a magnifying glass and a dictionary. At times he would mutter indistinctly to himself, lift his eyebrows, nod or shake his head, bite his lips and rub his forehead, and anon fall to work again with fresh vigor. At last he leaned back in his chair, thumped his hand on the table, and laughed.

"Got it!" he exclaimed. "Say, John, old boy, I've got it! and it's the most curious old thing ever you saw in your life!"

"Something in analytical geometry, isn't it?" said I, turning round on my piano-stool.

"Analytical pudding's end! It's a plan of a house, my boy, and what's more, of this very house we're in! That's a find, and no mistake! These are the descriptions and explanations—these bits of writing. It's a perfect labyrinth of Crete! Udolpho was nothing to it!"

"Well, I suppose it isn't much value except as a curiosity?"

"Don't be too sure of that, John, my boy. Who knows but there's a treasure concealed somewhere in this house! or a skeleton in a secret chamber! This old paper may make our fortune yet!"

"The treasure wouldn't belong to us if we found it; and besides, we can't make explorations beyond our own premises, and we know what's in them already."

"Do we? Did we know what was behind the looking-glass? Did you never hear of sliding panels, and private passages, and concealed staircases? Where's your imagination, man? But you don't need imagination—here it is in black and white!"

As he spoke, he pointed to a part of the plan; but, as I was stooping to examine it, he seemed to change his mind.

"No matter," he exclaimed, suddenly, folding up the paper and rising from his chair. "You're not an architect, and you can't be expected to go in for these things. No; there's no practical use in it, of course. But secret passages were always a hobby of mine. Well, what are you going to do this evening? Come over to the café and have a game of billiards!"

"No; I shall go to bed early to-night."

"You sleep too much," said Paton—"everybody does. If my father, instead of inventing a way of promoting sleep, had invented a way of doing without it, he'd have been the richest man in America to-day. However, do as you like. I shan't be back till late."

He put on his hat and sallied forth with a cigar in his mouth. Paton was of rather a convivial turn; he liked to have a good time, as he called it; and indeed he seemed to think that the chief end of man was to get money enough to have a good time continually, a sort of good eternity. His head was strong, and he could stand a great deal of liquor; and I have seen him sip and savor a glass of raw brandy or whiskey, as another man would do with a glass of Madeira. In this, and the other phases of his life about town, I had no participation, being constitutionally as well as by training adverse therefrom; and he, on the other hand, would never have listened to my sage advice to modify his loose habits. Our companionship was apart from these things; and, as I have said, I found in him a good deal that I could sympathize with, without approaching the moralities.

That night, after I had been for some time asleep, I awoke and found myself listening to a scratching and shoving noise that seemed quite unaccountable. By and by it made me uneasy. I got up and went toward the parlor, from which the noise proceeded. On reaching the doorway, I saw Paton on his knees before one of the pilasters in the narrow end of the room; a candle was on the floor beside him, and he was busily at work at something, though what it was I could not make out. The creak of the threshold under my foot caused him to look around. He started violently and sprang to his feet.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" he said, after a moment. "Great Scott! how you scared me! I was—I dropped a bit of money hereabouts, and I was scraping about to find it. No matter, it wasn't much! Sorry I disturbed you, old boy." And laughing, he picked up his candle and went into his own room.

From this time there was a change vaguely perceptible in our mutual relations; we chatted together less than before, and did not see so much of each other. Paton was apt to be out when I was at home, and generally sat up after I was abed. He seemed to be busy about something—something connected with his profession, I judged; but, contrary to his former custom, he made no attempt to interest me in it. To tell the truth, I had begun to realize that our different tastes and pursuits must lead us further and further apart, and that our separation could be only a question of time. Paton was a materialist, and inclined to challenge all the laws and convictions that mankind has instituted and adopted: there was no limit to his radicalism. For example, on coming in one day, I found him with a curious antique poniard in his hands, which he had probably bought in some old curiosity shop. At first I fancied he meant to conceal it; but if so he changed his mind.

"What do you think of that?" he said, holding it out to me. "There's a solution of continuity for you! Mind you don't prick yourself! It's poisoned up to the hilt!"

"What do you want of such a thing?" I asked.

"Well, killing began with Cain, and it isn't likely to go out of fashion in our day. I might find it convenient to give one of my friends—you, for instance—a reminder of his mortality some time. You'll say murder is immoral. Bless you, man, we never could do without it! No man dies before his time, and some one dies every day that some one else may live."

This was said in a jocose way, and of course Paton did not mean it. But it affected me unpleasantly, nevertheless.

As I was washing my hands in my room, I happened to look out of my window, which commanded a view of the garden at the back of the house. It was an hour after sunset, and the garden was nearly dark; but I caught a movement of something below, and looking more closely, I recognized the ugly figure of the portier. He seemed to be tying something to the end of a long

slender pole, like a gigantic fishing-rod; and presently he advanced beneath my window, and raised the pole as high as it would go against the wall of the house. The point he touched was the sill of the window below mine—probably that of the bedroom of Herr Kragendorf. At this juncture the portier seemed to be startled at something—possibly he saw me at my window—at all events, he lowered his pole and disappeared in the house.

The next day Paton made an announcement that took me by surprise. He said he had made up his mind to quit Germany, and that very shortly. He mentioned having received letters from home, and declared he had got, or should soon have got, all he wanted out of this country. "I'm going to stop paying money for instruction," he said, "and begin to earn it by work. I shall stay another week, but then I'm off. Too slow here for me! I want to be in the midst of things, using my time."

I did not attempt to dissuade him; in fact, my first feeling was rather one of relief; and this Paton, with his quick perceptions, was probably aware of.

"Own up, old boy," he said, laughing; "you'll be able to endure my absence. And yet you needn't think of me as worse than anybody else. If everybody were musicians and moralists, it would be nice, no doubt; but one might get tired of it in time, and then what would you do? You must give the scamps and adventurers their innings, after all! They may not do much good, but they give the other fellows occupation. I was born without my leave being asked, and I may act as suits me without asking anybody's leave."

This was said on a certain bright morning after our first fall of snow; the tiled roofs of the houses were whitened with it, it cushioned the window-sills, and spread a sparkling blankness over the garden. In the streets it was already melting, and people were slipping and splashing on the wet and glistening pavements. After gazing out at this scene for a while, in a mood of unwonted thoughtfulness, Paton yawned, stretched himself, and declared his intention of taking a stroll

before dinner. Accordingly he lit a cigar and went forth. I watched him go down the street and turn the corner.

An hour afterward, just when dinner was on the table, I heard an unusual noise and shuffling on the stairs, and a heavy knock on the door. I opened it, and saw four men bearing on a pallet the form of my friend Paton. A police officer accompanied them. They brought Paton in, and laid him on his bed. The officer told me briefly what had happened, gave me certain directions, and saying that a surgeon would arrive immediately, he departed with the four men tramping behind him.

Paton had slipped in going across the street, and a tramway-car had run over him. He was not dead, though almost speechless; but his injuries were such that it was impossible he should recover. He kept his eyes upon me; they were as bright as ever, though his face was deadly pale. He seemed to be trying to read my thoughts—to find out my feelings about him, and my opinion of his condition. I was terribly shocked and grieved, and my face no doubt showed it. By and by I saw his lips move, and bent down to listen.

"Confounded nuisance!" he whispered faintly in my ear. "It's all right, though; I'm not going to die this time. I've got something to do, and I'm going to do it—devil take me if I don't!"

He was unable to say more, and soon after the surgeon came in. He made an examination, and it was evident that he had no hope. His shrug of the shoulders was not lost upon Paton, who frowned, and made a defiant movement of the lip. But presently he said to me, still in the same whisper, "John, if that old fool should be right—he won't be, but in case of accidents—you must take charge of my things—the papers, and all. I'll make you heir of my expectations! Write out a declaration to that effect: I can sign my name; and he'll be witness." I did as he directed, and having explained to the surgeon the nature of the document, I put the pen in Paton's hand; but was obliged to guide his hand with my own in order to make an intelligible

signature. The surgeon signed below, and Paton seemed satisfied. He closed his eyes; his sufferings appeared to be very slight. But, even while I was looking at him, a change came over his face—a deadly change. His eyes opened; they were no longer bright, but sunken and dull. He gave me a dusky look—whether of rage, of fear, or of entreaty, I could not tell. His lips parted, and a voice made itself audible; not like his own voice, but husky and discordant. "I'm going," it said. "But look out for me. . . . Do it yourself!"

"Der Herr ist todt (the man is dead)," said the surgeon, the next minute.

It was true. Paton had gone out of this life at an hour's warning. What purpose or desire his last words indicated, there was nothing to show. He was dead; and yet I could hardly believe that it was so. He had been so much alive; so full of schemes and enterprises. Nothing now was left but that crushed and haggard figure, stiffening on the bed; nothing, at least, that mortal senses could take cognizance of. It was a strange thought.

Paton's funeral took place a few days afterward. I returned from the graveyard weary in body and mind. At the door of the house stood the portier, who nodded to me, and said:

"A very sad thing to happen, worthy sir; but so it is in the world. Of all the occupants of this house, one would have said the least likely to be dead to-day was Herr Jeffries. Heh! if I had been the good Providence, I would have made away with the old gentleman of the étage below, who is of no use to anybody."

This, for lack of a better, was Paton's funeral oration. I climbed the three flights of stairs and let myself into our apartment—mine exclusively now. The place was terribly lonely: much more so than if Paton had been alive anywhere in the world. But he was dead; and if his own philosophy were true, he was annihilated. But it was not true! How distinct and minute was my recollection of him—his look, his gestures, the tones of his voice. I could almost see him before me; my memory

of him dead seemed clearer than when he was alive. In that invisible world of the mind was he not living still, and perhaps not far away?

I sat down at the table where he had been wont to work, and unlocked the drawers in which he kept his papers. These, or some of them, I took out and spread before me. But I found it impossible, as yet, to concentrate my attention upon them; I pushed back my chair, and, rising, went to the piano. Here I remained for perhaps a couple of hours, striking the vague chords that echo wandering thoughts. I was trying to banish this haunting image of Paton from my mind; and at length I partly succeeded.

All at once, however, the impression of him (as I may call it) came back with a force and vividness that startled me. I stopped playing, and sat for a minute perfectly still. I felt that Paton was in the room; that if I looked round, I should see him. I, however, restrained myself from looking round with all the strength of my will—wherefore, I know not. What I felt was not fear, but the conviction that I was on the brink of a fearful and unprecedented experience—an experience that would not leave me as it found me. This strange struggle with myself taxed all my powers; the sweat started out on my forehead. At last the moment came when I could struggle no longer. I laid my hand on the keyboard and pushed myself round on the stool. There was a momentary dazzle before my eyes, and after that I saw plainly. My hand, striking the keys, had produced a jarring discord; and while this was yet tingling in my ears, Paton, who was sitting in his old place at the table, with his back toward me, faced about in his chair, and his eyes met mine. I thought he smiled.

My excitement was past, and was succeeded by a dead calm. I examined him critically. His appearance was much the same as when in life; nay, he was even more like himself than before. The subtle or crafty expression which had always been discernible in his features was now intensified, and there was something wild and covertly fierce in the shining of his gray

eyes, something that his smile was unable to disguise. What was human and genial in my former friend had passed away, and what remained was evil; the kind of evil that I now perceived to have been at the base of his nature. It was a revelation of character terrible in its naked completeness. I knew at a glance that Paton must always have been a far more wicked man than I had ever imagined; and in his present state all the remains of goodness had been stripped away, and nothing but wickedness was left.

He beckoned to me, and I approached; for he had power over me, whence derived or how exercised I do not know. He pointed to the papers on the table, and it at once entered into my mind to perceive a certain method and meaning in them that had been hidden from me before. It was as though I were looking at them through his intelligence, and with his memory. He was now standing at the corner of the table, though I had not noticed him leave his chair. He motioned me to take the place he had vacated, and I did so. Under his guidance, and in obedience to a will that seemed to be my own, and yet was in direct opposition to my real will, I began a systematic study of the papers. Paton, meanwhile, had taken up his position at the other side of the table, and as often as I glanced up, I found his shining eyes fixed upon me, still with that fierce, crafty smile. I soon obtained a tolerable insight into what the papers meant, and what was the scheme in which Paton had been so much absorbed at the time of his death, and which he had been so loth to abandon. It was a wicked and cruel scheme, worked out to the smallest particular. But though I understood its hideousness intellectually, it aroused in me no corresponding emotion; my sensitiveness to right and wrong seemed stupefied or inoperative. I could say, "This is wicked," but I could not awaken in myself a horror of committing the wickedness; and, moreover, I knew that, if the influence Paton was able to exercise over me continued, I must in due time commit it.

Presently I became aware, or, to speak more accurately, I seemed to remember, that there was something

in Paton's room which it was incumbent on me to procure. I went thither, lifted up a corner of the rug between the bed and the stove, and beheld, in an aperture in the floor, of the existence of which I had till now known nothing, the antique poisoned dagger that Paton had shown me a few weeks before, and which I had not seen since then. I brought it back to the sitting-room, put it in a drawer of the table, and locked the drawer, at the same time making a mental note to the effect that I should reopen the drawer at a certain hour of the night and take the dagger out. All this while, Paton was close at hand, generally before my eyes, though even when he was out of my range of vision, I knew just where he was and what he was doing. It was now about sunset. Paton moved toward the looking-glass at the narrow end of the room, laid his hand upon one of the pilasters, glanced at me over his shoulder, and immediately seemed to stoop down. As I sat, the edge of the table hid him from sight. I stood up and looked across. He was not there; and a kind of reaction of my nerves informed me that he was gone, for the time.

This reaction produced a lassitude impossible to describe; it was overpowering, and I had no choice but to yield to it. I dropped back in my chair, and instantly fell into a heavy sleep, or stupor.

I awoke abruptly, with a sensation as if a hand had been laid on my shoulder. It was night, and I knew that the hour I had noted in my mind was at hand. I opened the drawer and took out the dagger, which I put in my pocket. The house was quite silent. A shiver passed through me. I was aware that Paton was standing at the narrow end of the room, waiting for me: Yes—there he was, dimly defined, but unmistakable. I arose mechanically, and walked toward him. He had no need to direct me: I knew all there was to do, and how to do it. I knelt on the floor, laid my shoulder against the pilaster, and pushed it laterally. It moved aside on a pivot, disclosing an iron ring let into the floor. I laid hold of this ring, and lifted. A section of the floor came up, and I saw a sort of ladder descending

perpendicularly into darkness. Down the ladder Paton went, and I followed him. Arrived at the bottom, I turned to the left, led by an instinct or a fascination; passed along a passage barely wide enough to admit me, until I came against a smooth, hard surface. I passed my hand over it until I touched a knob or catch, which I pressed, and the surface gave way before me like a door. I stumbled forward, and found myself in a room of what was doubtless Herr Kragendorf's apartment. A keen, cold air smote against my face; and with it came a sudden influx of strength and self-possession. But what was that sound of a struggle—those cries and gasps, that seemed to come from an adjoining room?

I sprang forward, opened a door, and beheld a tall old man, with white hair and beard, in the grasp of a ruffian whom I at once recognized as the portier. A broken window showed how he had effected his entrance. One hand held the old man by the throat; in the other was a knife, which he was prevented from using by a young woman, who had flung herself upon him in such a way as to trammel his movements. In another moment, however, he would have shaken her off.

But that moment was not allowed him. I seized him with a strength that amazed myself—a strength which has never come upon me before or since. The conflict lasted but a breath or two; I hurled him to the floor, and, as he fell, his right arm was doubled under him, and the knife which he held entered his back beneath the left shoulder-blade. When I rose up from the whirl and fury of the struggle, I saw the old man reclining exhausted on the bosom of the girl. I knew him, despite his white hair and beard. And the face that bent so lovingly above him was the face that had looked into mine that night on the street—the face of the blue-eyed maiden—of a younger and lovelier Juliet! As I gazed, there came a thundering summons at the door, and the police entered.

. . . . . .

My poor uncle Körner had not prospered after his great stroke of roguery. His wife had died of a broken

heart, after giving birth to a daughter, and his stolen riches had vanished almost as rapidly as they were acquired. He had at last settled down with his daughter in this old house. The treasure in the leathern bag, though a treasure to him, was not of a nature to excite general cupidity. It consisted, not of precious stones, but of relics of his dead wife—her rings, a lock of her hair, her letters, a miniature of her in a gold case. These poor keepsakes, and his daughter, had been the only solace of his lonely and remorseful life.

It was uncertain whether Paton and the portier had planned the robbery together, or separately, and in ignorance of each other's purpose. Nor can I tell whether my disembodied visitor came to me with good or with evil intent. Wicked spirits, even when they seem to have power to carry out their purposes, are perhaps only permitted to do so so far as is consistent with an over-ruling good of which they know nothing. Certainly, if I had not descended the secret passage, Körner would have been killed, and perhaps my Juliet likewise—the mother of my children. But should I have been led to stab him myself, with the poisoned dagger, had the portier not been there? Juliet smiles and says No, and I am glad to agree with her. But I have never since then found that anniversary upon me, without a shudder of awe, and a dark thought of Paton Jeffries.

This simple but touching love-story, written for ROMANCE by Albert Hardy, is that of scores of women on the sea-coast, who, like "Hannah Binding Shoes," see their sweethearts "sail away," and wait with aching hearts for their return.

HE SAILED AWAY.

RUTH LINTON sat in a little, high-backed rocker, looking out at the broad expanse of water, which extended as far as the eye could reach. There the ocean seemed to meet the heavens, and the dividing line was lost in the summer haze. When she was a child, Ruth used to wonder if the ships sailed right up to heaven when they went out of sight over the sea. But in later years she learned better, for her father, who was second mate of the *Dolphin*, always came back after his long voyages. He died when Ruth was ten, and she remembered him only vaguely. Since then she and her mother had lived in the modest little cottage in Arlington.

Arlington is a sea-coast, but not a seaport, town, and in the days of which I write depended upon the next town, from which many vessels sailed, for almost everything. The Lintons, mother and daughter, were not poor; they owned a small interest in a whaler, of which Mrs. Linton's father had been captain, and the house and garden were their own.

Any one—including her enemies, if she had any, which is doubtful,—would have called Ruth pretty as she sat by the window on this particular evening. In fact, she was pretty at any time; never beautiful, but simply and daintily pretty. She was twenty, and looked it, in her dress of fresh, white India muslin. The two blush rosebuds which she wore in her dark brown hair, and at her throat, were little less delicate than the pink of her cheeks. She had dark-blue eyes, a nose which was so near like other noses that it was not conspicuous either for its symmetry or its ill shape,

and a mouth large enough so that when she smiled she showed two rows of perfect teeth. In those days Ruth laughed a good deal. She was laughing now at the antics of a pet kitten that had wound herself in a ball of red worsted with which Ruth had been working, until she struggled desperately, but unsuccessfully to be free.

The tea things had been cleared away, and it was just beginning to be dusk. Ruth was not a romantic girl, but she loved to sit in the shadow which the blush rose-bush made about the window, look off at the ships going and coming over the sea, and think. Now she was thinking, but not of the ships.

Every evening when Ray Mannard closed the village store, he used to stop at the Widow Linton's cottage, and he didn't stop entirely to see the widow. On Thursdays and Sundays he walked home with Ruth from the little Methodist meeting-house, after prayer-meeting, and they sometimes went to a party or excursion, but not often.

Ray was twenty-two, and just the sort of fellow whom one would expect a girl like Ruth to fall in love with. Perhaps the term in the case of these two young people has been wrongly applied. It would have been hard for either of them to have told when they "fell" in love. It had been a steady growth, going on ever since they were little children. It had been understood, not only by Ruth and Ray, but by the two families as well, that some day they should marry. But there was no hurry on either side. Ruth was never jealous if Ray walked or talked with another girl in the village, and Ray was far from being suspicious if he found a young villager on the front porch or in the little parlor when he stopped in on his way home from the store. The perfect confidence which they had in one another made their lives run on smoothly and peacefully. To-night Ray did not whistle when he opened the gate and hurried up the flower-set walk. His face was troubled, and it was some time before Ruth could understand. But it came at last.

"Ruth," he said, "I am going away. I cannot

always stay here, working and drudging, with small pay and few thanks."

He hurried on, not giving Ruth an opportunity to express her views on so serious a question as Ray's leaving her. She looked frightened at first; then waited patiently.

"My uncle in New York," Ray continued, "has made me a most excellent offer to represent his house in the East Indies. I want money and influence, and when I return in a year, I want Ruth Linton for my little wife."

Ruth said but little. The news was so sudden; and she would miss Ray so much.

"Only promise me that you will wait for me," said Ray.

"Why, of course I will wait for you, Ray, dear," answered the girl, almost wondering that she should be expected to promise a thing which to her seemed so natural and right. And so he left her for his East Indian mission.

During the first year letters came frequently,—as frequently as possible, considering the long distance, and the sailing ships which in those days had to carry them. At the end of the first year Ray wrote that his business would keep him longer than he at first expected, but from the tone of his letters Ruth could never doubt her lover's devotion.

Two, three years dragged slowly along for Ruth, and still Ray did not return. Then the letters stopped, and poor little Ruth had to bear her sorrow and disappointment as best she could. But she never doubted Ray's fidelity. Perhaps he had met with an accident; perhaps he was coming home to surprise her; perhaps he was —no, the possibility of his being dead fell across her soul like a dark shadow.

Ruth was thirty when her mother died; but still she waited in the little cottage, and bravely kept her promise. Many admirers had come, asking for her hand and heart, during the ten years, but to them all Ruth had said, "No."

Time went drearily on, until thirty years were numbered since Ray had sailed away. Ruth was fifty, but

she was still comely, in spite of the care and trouble, the disappointment and grief, which had left their marks upon her.

Thirty years! Did you ever wait in the night for some loved one's return? How long the hours seemed; how often you looked at the clock; how you strained your ear for the familiar footstep—some sign of his coming! And the disappointment when he did not come; the watching and waiting, long after the lights had been turned out, and you had gone to bed; the broken dreams, and the vague forebodings of danger! To Ruth it was not one night, but thirty years.

The course of time brought another just such summer evening as the one on which Ray went away. Ruth sat beside the open window, looking off over the sea—looking to the Indies, she used to say to herself. She was thinking of Ray; she always thought of Ray, especially in the evening, when the shadows grew long under the maples that bordered the street, and the whip-poor-wills gave their sad calls across the meadows behind the cottage.

There was a ringing step along the street, a stop at the little gate, a click of the latch, and a figure hurrying up the gravel walk. Was it Ray? Ruth trembled so that she could scarcely respond to the knock at the door. Then she opened it, and a man stood before her. He was bearded, old and gray.

"Miss Ruth Linton?" he asked, as he removed his hat.

He went into the little parlor, and sat awkwardly upon the black hair-cloth sofa.

"I have come from India," he began.

"You are not Ray?" broke in Ruth.

"No," said the stranger, "I was his friend."

"*Was* his friend." The man need have said no more; but he slowly and faithfully told his story. Ray had died years before. "Go to America," he had said to his friend, "and tell Ruth to wait for me. We shall meet in some other world, brighter and better than this." The friend had been a reckless wanderer, but always meant to keep the promise made to Ray. Now he had done so.

Long after the messenger had gone, Ruth sat by the open window. A slant of light from the dying day crept through a rift in the rose-bush outside the window, and touched the threads of silver in her hair. It fell upon her work-worn hands, and upon the sad lines in her face. All the light,—the glad, expectant light, which had shone there for so many, many years—had gone out from her eyes. She did not cry. But how dreary and lonely the little parlor seemed! It was all settled now; that her lover would never come again, on this earth.

The bell in the spire of the white meeting-house, down the street, rang dismally. It was Thursday night. Ruth rose mechanically, tied the ribbons of her bonnet firmly and squarely under her chin, folded her dark, old-fashioned shawl over her shoulders, and went to prayer-meeting.

ROMANCE.

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It is true that the negative located the mystery, but if little "Clem," with a child's skill at seeing what nobody else can find, had not fished the whole motive of this story out of the swamp, the agony of the Gardiners and Cabots might have been much longer protracted, to the ruin of their Christmas. The story shows, throughout, the inimitable touch of its author, Octave Thanet.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE NEGATIVE.

One afternoon (one "evening" we call it in the South) three days before Christmas, Miss Betty Lorrimer went out in the woods, with her camera, to take a few views.

She told her half-sister, Mrs. Esmée Cabot (the Gardiner who married a Northerner and, at twenty, was left a widow with one child) and Mrs. Cabot's sister-in-law, Mildred Cabot, that she should be back before supper, in time to show Aunt Tempe about the new salad.

Esmée and Mildred had watched the stately shape as it passed, with a little flutter of black skirts, out of the shadows of the great gum trees of the avenue, into the clearing before the store where the thin line of planks (by courtesy "the sidewalk") shone whitely, and the great pile of brush on the river-bank made a pretty etching in purple.

Beyond, the horizon showed the cotton-gin, and between were the store, the smoke-house and the ordinary buildings of a plantation; while, on the right, the river ran musically into a circular red haze of willows, which defined the forest.

Back of the two women was "the great house," better deserving the name than most of its class, for it was built in that ample colonial fashion which is now again revived; being, as it happened, a loving copy of the first owner's paternal mansion on the Mississippi.

Gen. Philip Gardiner built the house. He was the great personage of the region, but out of his four plantations there remained to his grandchildren only La Rose Blanche.

There were two grandchildren, Judge Roger Gardiner and Esmée Cabot, born Gardiner; and there was a third owner of the plantation, Betty Lorrimer, whose mother was the second Mrs. Roger Gardiner, the old General's daughter-in-law; but whose father was Evelyn Lorrimer of South Carolina. Betty was a little maid, just three years old on her mother's second wedding-day, that fatal day on which Arkansas rushed out of the Union "before breakfast." One may therefore make a shrewd guess at Miss Betty's age in the year of grace, 1892. I protest, however, save for such intrusive statistics, no man alive—even with the sun full against Miss Betty's brilliant face—would dare to give it a year beyond thirty.

Roger, Judge Gardiner, was Colonel Roger's only son. He, on this same wedding-day, was a lad of sixteen. What a lad can do in war, he did; fighting through it all, until for Arkansas the cause was lost. The last year of the war Esmée was born, and before the poor baby was a year old she was an orphan.

They were all children together; but Betty somehow reared, and, after a fashion, educated the child. She had a small property through a northern aunt, and this property, being in ready money, lifted the heaviest of the mortgages. Thus, Betty, also, was part owner and, gossip said, greater part manager of the plantation. They were rich people now for Arkansas. Mildred Cabot admired the trim fences and straight furrows of the fields; and there were enough clean new houses to gratify her New England eye. But, to-day, she was looking solely at Miss Betty. Decidedly, she thought, the southern gentlewoman had the carriage of a princess. What a fine figure, and how well she walked! "I wonder"—she exclaimed, speaking her thoughts aloud.

"Wonder what?" asked Mrs. Cabot, smiling. She was peering down the wood vista to see the ox-cart and the Christmas-tree and her only child, Clement Cabot, whose yellow curls ought to be dancing above the green spikes.

"I wonder why Miss Betty has never married," said Mildred.

Was it her fancy that a faint color crept into Mrs. Cabot's cheek and that she dropped her white lids over her dove-like eyes, like a person suddenly confused? But, again, why should she be confused?

"It has not been for lack of opportunities," said Mrs. Cabot.

"I daresay. Haven't you ever wondered why the Judge and she never——"

"His heart is in the grave," interrupted Mrs. Cabot, solemnly, that is, in as solemn a tone as one can manage who speaks with her mouth full of nails, for she was nailing up a box of mistletoe and holly to go North.

"Then he would better fish it out," Mildred, the irreverent, replied, dryly.

Mrs. Cabot hammered at the box, pounding her fingers rather more than the nails. "Betty told me to leave it for her to do," she moaned. "Dear! I wish I had minded her!"

Miss Mildred, however, pursued her subject remorselessly and her pretty blue eyes noted every sensitive quiver of Mrs. Cabot's face, as well as how red she had grown, stooping over the box.

"Of course," said Mildred, "if she had cared for him, such constancy could be understood and is very beautiful and poetical, and all that sort of thing; but she *didn't;* she treated him very badly, I understand. Didn't she run away from him on their wedding-day? Or something awful?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Mrs. Cabot sadly, "with Col. Munro Holland. They said at the last moment he persuaded her to run out the side door, jump into his buggy and go. She didn't even take a change of clothes with her. She left a note in lead pencil to beg them to forgive her; she had gone away with the only man she ever loved. Ah, poor thing, it was her misfortune more than Roger's, though he had a brain fever after it. Betty would have it that it was quite as much the cold he caught riding after her in his dress-coat, with her brother, to see that villain *did* marry her. Yes, Sister Milly, he was as bad as *that;* his reputation was *notorious!* And, afterward, it was pitiful all she went

through, for she clung to him as long as she lived, though they used to have dreadful quarrels, for Susy was high-spirited. But on her death-bed she sent for Roger. Do you know, he had broken his leg? It was that time they had the log jam in the river at the overflow, and Roger rescued two men and got his own leg broken, dear boy.

"Ah, me, how well I remember that day. Clem was sick with one of his awful stuffy colds, and I was sitting by him; and Sister Betty came in with the note. 'Roger gave it to me,' said she. It was a dreadful thing, Mildred, to see Betty so pale. She is always so gay and laughing, speaking a little short sometimes, but never bothered by things, laughing everything off and ready with a plan; but she was pale as pale, and her hand trembled, too. 'He was getting over it,' that was every word she said while I read the letter. I expect I looked ready to cry, myself, for, you see, Roger was all the brother we had and he had been so wretched, and, lately, he had grown cheerful again, like old times. I understood what she meant as well as if she had talked hours. That death-bed scene would bring everything back. Well," Mrs. Cabot sighed, "I reckon it did. 'Twas after she died that he had her picture painted and hung up in his room and he always has flowers before it."

"But how did he get there?"

"Oh, Betty drove him. Such an awful night, too—thundering and lightning, and the roads fit to mire a snipe, as we say."

"But why didn't one of the darkeys——"

"Mercy! Sister Milly, there isn't a darkey on the place could have driven Pomp and Lochinvar that night; it was all Betty could do to hold them."

"But it was quite a matter of course for Miss Betty to risk her life!" thought the girl, indignantly; "they let *her* do everything."

Mrs. Cabot, like all good narrators, was borne on the current of her tale; she forgot the reserves of pride which had kept her dumb hitherto.

"What passed within that chamber," she said, "no

one but Roger will ever know; he came out with a face whiter than the dead woman's, for she had died there in his arms. All we know is that she entreated him to care for her child until we could know if her sister would take the little thing. So, that very night Roger fetched her home. She wasn't a *very* nice little girl," said Mrs. Cabot, deprecatingly; "she had such a high temper, and would kick and scream and throw things at people, and it was really dreadful the lies she told. But, after all, she was so pretty and so sweet when she wasn't in a passion that we all felt distressed when her aunt did send for her. Poor Roger! it was a terrible blow to him. He reckoned we should keep her always; and he never did see much of her tantrums, except that once she threw a cup of coffee at him because he wouldn't let her pour syrup over the table-cloth to make a bayou. But it wasn't *very* hot. Poor Roger! he has had so many disappointments, and he has borne them beautifully."

"He seems pretty comfortable now," observed Mildred, dryly. She did not share in the family adoration of Roger.

"Ah, that is only outwardly," said Mrs. Cabot, to which the younger woman made no reply.

She waited in the doorway until Miss Betty had disappeared. An opal haze veiled the distant forest, now red, now purple. Nearer, Mildred could see the gleam of the ruined gold on the maple limbs, or smears of green on the live oaks, or the still brilliant scarlet and yellow of the dogwood leaves; for December in Arkansas spares some relics of the splendid pigments of Autumn. Clumps of mistletoe, with wax white spangles, clung to the tree-limbs everywhere, a strange sight to a northern eye. And there was a glossy green holly tree at the gate.

It might have been ten minutes, or it might have been half-an-hour, that the New England girl stood looking at this soft and unfamiliar scene before she perceived any sign of life beyond a few cattle, a scampering flock of sheep and half-a-dozen black pigs. Then the new form of life took the shape of a horseman, who presently rode into the gate and up the avenue. Dis-

mounting, he showed himself to be a man of middle age (his hair was quite gray), slight and not tall of figure, with delicate features and a very gentle expression. He had large liquid blue eyes with long lashes. He wore only a mustache, and when he courteously removed his hat, one could see that, if gray, his hair was not thin, but curled thickly over a handsome head. He was dressed rather smartly, in a striped flannel shirt under a loose coat, with riding-leggins buttoned up above his knees, and a soft, gray hat. But Mildred was aware that Miss Betty had given him the hat, and fancifully stitched the shirt, while his sister Esmée had bought the leggins.

Roger Gardiner (for it was he) greeted the young lady courteously, and inquired where Miss Betty was. When Mildred replied that she was gone for the afternoon, he looked faintly annoyed.

"You don't happen to know if she looked over those accounts of sales?" said he, "or—or anything else."

"Yes," Mildred said, "they are all made out, on the library desk; and the MS. you wanted copied on the type-writer is done, and lying there, too."

His brow cleared. "I might have known Betty wouldn't neglect anything," said he, "though indeed it is a shame to put so much on her. Thank you, Miss Mildred."

He went in; and Mildred shrugged her pretty shoulders, thinking: "He depends on Miss Betty, indefinitely. Thanks to her, he can write law-books in peace, while she manages the plantation and makes money for him. And his heart is buried in the grave, is it? Well, if *I* were Miss Betty, I should let it stay there forever."

Entering the house, she walked upstairs to her own room. Thus she had occasion to pass Judge Gardiner's door, and it stood ajar. It revealed a strip of wall whereon hung the portrait of a lady; below the picture a table standing against the wall, and on the table a vase overflowing with La France roses.

Now the roses in the garden were gone.

"He fetched those from Little Rock," said Mildred,

"he gets them twice a week. Ah, he is a goose! Poor Miss Betty! I suppose she is a goose, too."

She sighed as she settled herself in her own chair in her own room and turned her thoughts on a more important subject, namely, the three Dillingham dolls which must be dressed that afternoon.

It was not until the supper-bell rang that she went downstairs again. The table stood ready, the lamplight on silver and glass and snowy damask; and the bunch of red swamp hack-berries in the centre. There was a blazing fire in the great fire-place, and the flames polished the edges of the old mahogany furniture and painted fantastic images in the silver on the side-board, and drew the dark features of the canvas Gardiners into a flickering semblance of life. Mildred had a passing thought of the pretty scene and its significance. There was a certain repose and dignity about this simple, peaceful life under an ancestral roof, where work did not mean a feverish conflict, nor success a savagery of triumph and victims under the chariot-wheels.

"Who knows? Perhaps I have stumbled into Arcadia," she thought fancifully; then, all at once, she perceived that Esmée looked anxious and the Judge was elaborately cheerful.

Miss Betty was not in the room. Esmée said that she had not returned.

"Doubtless she is taking photographs in the dark," said the Judge. "I know she took them until it was dark, anyhow, and then she has to get home."

"It's not like Sister Betty to promise anything, and not do it," said Esmée, "she certainly did say she would be back to help Tempe make the salad."

But they were obliged to sit down without either Miss Betty or the salad.

As the evening wore on, Esmée grew frightened. The Judge continued cheerful, but he readily agreed to take a horse and ride out into the woods in search of the missing photographer. Before this they had questioned the servants, only to discover that Miss Betty had assured Tempe, the cook, that she would be back before dark, on account of the salad.

One woman had a word in addition: she had seen Miss Betty talking with Tom.

"Where is Tom? Send him here," said the Judge.

"Wall, Tom he done gone ayfter de caows; yen't got back yit," was the answer.

The Judge glanced at the clock. It was now nine o'clock.

"I reckon she has stayed somewhere all night, Sister Esmée," said he, "and like as not she has sent a message by that trifling Tom. But I'll go, anyhow."

His confidence, whether real or not, cheered Mrs. Cabot for a little while, until no less than four negroes appeared, conducting Tom.

Mildred had nicknamed Tom, Thomas-à-Kempis, on account of his voice of silken softness and a peculiarly meek dejection of manner. Tom was a poor counsellor in distress, since his mind turned to gloom as naturally as a cat does to cream. Tom it was, on those occasions when Master Clem was missing, who had always observed "a powerful funny bit er trash floatin' daown de ribber, an' looked like it didn't ben a *log*, needer!" And it was Tom who found the movements of the wild hogs suspicious, and "'lowed dey ben got somefin', looked like dey ben *chawin-like*." So on through every danger which could overtake a boy of five—Tom never slighted one. Naturally, he had an unwavering faith in his own especial ill luck. He was also superstitious to a degree, scrupulous about the "dark of the moon," and vastly civil to "conjure men."

It did not imply that Tom was any cheerfuler than usual that he should appear before his mistress, grinning. Grief and fright, as well as mirth, find expression in a negro's teeth. Grin he did, however, and his mild, brown face, with its flattened Roman nose and full African lips, was inclined at just the angle to show most of the white of his rolling eyeballs.

"Dar's Tom, Miss Esmy, bress de Lawd!" called the chorus; "*he* seen Miss Betty."

"Tom," said Esmée, "did Miss Betty tell you where she was going?"

"Ya'as'm," said Tom, "she say she aim fur ter

draw* de big slash daown by de big bayou. Dey's right smart er swag lan' dar 'baout. Reckon she done got mired up."

"Miss Betty knows better than to get mired up," cried Esmée, impatiently, but she turned pale.

"Wall," said Tom, "she cud git in dem ar quicksands aout mistrustin'——"

"She knows where they are."

"Naw, Miss Esmy; naw ma'am," said Tom with patient melancholy; "she pintedly does *not*, kase she did ax me whar ben dey all."

"And you told her, didn't you?" said Mildred.

"Ya'as'm. I tole er dat I didn't know."

"You, Tom! go and put the gears on Snip. Put him into the cart. I'm going to look for Miss Betty, too."

Mrs. Cabot struck into the conversation with a decision that startled Mildred. Never before had she seen her gentle, delicate, timid sister-in-law excited. Now she caught a glimpse of the fiery energy which underlies the Southern languor. Esmée swept Tom's frightened excuses away like chaff. Almost before Mildred realized that they were going, she was listening to their swift wheels. Esmée would not have her company; Tom could drive; somebody must be home to welcome Betty. "Besides, there are all the candy bags," she said, forcing a kind of smile, "there is so little time, and Betty was so particular about them!"

Mildred stayed and worked over the candy bags, and tried to persuade herself that she wasn't frightened. Ten o'clock came; eleven; then Esmée returned.

Her single, haggard, eager glance about the room told Mildred how fruitless had been her search.

"Wa'll," said Tom, gently, "I knowed we-uns wudn't fine er. Fore I got home I yered a kinder yowlin', wailin', hollerin' noise, an' I does be sho', now, dat ar ben Miss Betty, a-sinkin' an' sinkin' in dem meshes, an' a-hollerin' on we-uns! In cose we-uns cudn't fine er, kase she done sinked plumb unner——"

"Tom, you'd better go to bed." Mildred cut the

* The negroes always speak of "*drawing* a photograph."

meek prophet's deliverances short, seeing that Esmée could bear no more.

The two women made a pretence of cheerfulness until midnight; at the striking of twelve Roger rode his jaded and mud-splashed horse up to the window. Alas! he had found no clew. To be sure, he had seen a teamster who had met Miss Betty near the gypsies' camp, but this happened hardly more than an hour after leaving home. Roger had ridden to the camp only to find the gypsies gone. He now had parties of his tenants out, searching the country round. Miss Betty was greatly beloved, and they could be trusted to hunt with a will.

"And the station?" said Mildred.

"I telephoned Carter at once. They haven't seen her. No, ma'am, I incline to the theory that she has found some one sick or suffering in some of the cabins, and is staying there. Very likely she has sent us word and it hasn't reached us. We will visit every house, for ten miles, before morning."

He would not wait longer than to swallow a cup of coffee.

In the morning he rode into the yard just as Tom was ringing the breakfast bell.

"Dey all ain't slep' a wink," said Tom dolefully; "reckon ye didn't find nary."

"No," said the Judge, conscious of an irrational craving to kick Tom.

Although every cabin—one may almost say, every inch of ground—on the plantation had been visited, not so much as a creature was seen who had met Miss Betty. It was as if that gentle yet determined lady had sunk through the earth.

Roger tried to eat breakfast with the others; but here, little Clem's innocent prattle of "auntie" jarred on the elders' strained nerves.

"Auntie's going to paint my wagon, if *'tis* in a hurry, and 'most Christmas," said Master Clem.

"She was never in too much of a hurry to do something for a child," said the Judge, and choked, and got his face behind his coffee cup.

"Tom makes me mad," Clem went on eagerly; "he

says my auntie's gone to Heaven, and I told him he was a liar, and I kicked him."

Nobody reproved the child's display of temper, though ordinarily he would have esteemed himself lucky not to be sent to bed at midday for such a performance. The Judge jumped up and walked to the window. Mrs. Cabot put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Miss Mildred," said the Judge, "won't you drive with me? I am going to look at the gypsy camp by daylight."

To go anywhere or to do anything is a relief at such anxious hours. Mildred accompanied him with eagerness.

"There is one house where the mistress was away," said the Judge, "but I have thought, maybe, some of the children may have seen her—Betty. It is that miserable Teague's. Maybe you know about them. The father is the worst scoundrel on earth. We ran him off the plantation, a year ago. But Betty was sorry for the mother and the children, and we let them stay. She used to help them in all sorts of ways. Do you reckon you ever saw such a kind-hearted lady as she is, Miss Mildred? Always seeking to do good and making light of it."

"Yes, indeed," assented Mildred, heartily. "Are you just beginning to realize that Miss Betty is a saint, even if she does like funny stories and isn't easily swindled?" she thought. But her heart softened to his simplicity, so unlike a Northerner's reticence; she had never liked him so well.

The Judge had drawn rein in front of the glade which served the gypsies for a camp.

"The question is," said he, "Did she go on further? If she did, the only road goes by the Teagues' house, and they may have seen her. I wish to Heaven I knew why those gypsy fellows made off so suddenly!"

He was visibly uneasy. Gypsy camps are a common feature of Arkansas landscapes during the autumn and early winter. Bands, travelling South, always camped for a day or two at La Rose Blanche, buying supplies at the store, trading horses, and made free, with South-

ern lavishness, with wood and game. Did a few gaps appear in a fence, were a few pigs or chickens missing, or did a cow come home with no milk for the childrer, there might be a little grumbling; but the gypsies sold horses cheaply, paid money for their supplies, pleased the settlement with an occasional bear-and-dog fight; hence, on the whole, their arrival made rather an agreeable break in plantation monotony.

Miss Cabot, however, had the New England distrust of all tramping creatures; she suspected them as soon as she heard that there were gypsies on the place.

"You don't think they—they could have done her any harm?" said she. The very energy with which he repelled the notion convinced her that he did think something of the kind.

"What motive," he demanded, "what *possible* motive could they have had?"

"They might take her away to get a ransom," suggested Mildred, "like Charley Ross, you know."

"You are almost as bad as Tom, Miss Mildred," said the Judge, lightly. Nevertheless she could see that the cloud on his face deepened.

They found Mrs. Teague washing and the children "packing up water" (that is, fetching it in buckets from the creek near by), except the baby, whose activities were safely confined to a large box, where he was consoled with a pork rind.

Mrs. Teague declared that all her brood were with her, picking cotton, "only jes Tommy; she been fixin' t' make a pone er bread. Tommy, you come aout! How came ye runnin' way from the wash?"

Tommy (at full length, Tommasina) stuck a shock of red hair and two scared-looking red-brown eyes out of the cabin door. "I ain't done nary t' nobody," whimpered Tommy.

Mildred, with the utmost gentleness, explained that they didn't suspect her of anything, they only wanted to ask her some questions.

"And if you answer them truly, and tell us everything you know," said the Judge, "there will be some oranges at the store."

"Miss Lorrimer, she done prommus we-uns a orange on the Christmas tree," chirped the smallest girl.

"And I know of a doll Tommy is likely to get, too," said the Judge.

Tommy's expression was so blurred by freckles that it was not easy to be sure when she was moved, but she gave an audible sniff.

"Did Miss Betty pass this way, yesterday?" said Mildred, coming to the point.

"Naw'm," answered Tommy, in a faint voice.

"Didn't you see her *at all?*"

"Naw'm," was the answer again.

"Well, why didn't you say so to us in the first place?" cried the Judge.

Tommy said "Dunno," and this time, the tears began to roll down her cheeks.

They questioned her further, only receiving a more extended repetition of her denial. She hadn't parted lips with Miss Betty Lorrimer. She hadn't put her eyes on Miss Betty Lorrimer since Sunday. She knew where bad little girls went who didn't tell the truth, but she couldn't help it, she hadn't seen her, she hadn't.

Here she lifted up her voice and wept.

The inquisitors drove away, feeling as if they had been torturing a child, yet each of them convinced that the child was lying.

"What motive, though?" repeated the Judge. "She can't care to screen the gypsies." He made a passionate sweep of the whip through the air. "This is maddening! I don't know which way to turn. I telegraphed all over, this morning, to find the whereabouts of these gypsies. I ought to be getting answers, soon. I'm going to see them, to get the truth out of them. And if they have dared—" only the swift pallor that swept over his face and the tightening lines of his mouth completed that sentence.

Mildred recoiled from the fire of his glance. How gentle he had seemed! Indeed she had called him weak, and half despised him with the intolerance of girlhood; and now—"that is the way men look when they kill!" she thought, timorously. She was afraid of him.

He may have perceived her emotion; because, at once, he smoothed his face, and added with his usual gentle courtesy, "I pray of you, Miss Mildred, that you won't let Esmée know anything of our suspicions."

"Surely not," exclaimed Mildred.

But when they met Tom half-way up the avenue, they perceived how little their own caution would avail. Tom, having met the teamster, had promptly shifted his catastrophe; being, now, persuaded that "po' Miss Betty ben killed up by dem triflin', thievin' gypsies."

"You fool," roared the Judge, "what would they kill her for?"

Tom's dejected mildness was unshaken. He went on in the same soft sorrowful drawl. "Waal, Jedge, she did have a right smart er money wid 'er, kase she did guv me a quarter an' I seen 'er puss ben plumb full. Ya'as, sah; it ben so."

The Judge had gone perfectly white, but he made an effort to rally, helped Mildred out, flung the reins to Tom and told him to take the horses to the stable—he was talking nonsense.

"Lord grant I is, sah!" observed Tom, piously, while he clambered partially into the wagon, letting one leg swing outside, negro fashion; "but, Jedge Gardner, ye knows yo'seff, sah, how dem gypsies jest natchelly takes to stealin'. Ye knows dey-uns done tolled away my best yearlin caff, las' year. An' ye knows, Miss Betty, how feary she ben. Laws, she wudn't be skeered to contrairey 'em. Like's not ef dey try robbin' of 'er she chastise* 'em right smart. Mebbe hit 'em a clip wid them poles, or her picter trick. Miss Betty, she ain't feered er de debbil an' any.† Doan' ye mind, Mist' Roger, de way she run in an' resky dat ar Teague's baby dat time you ben 'way in de Rock?‡ My, my! My, my! He ben a knockin' dat chile raoun' scandilus. De way Miss Betty run in an' grab it, an' de way dat er debbil man haul off, an' hit Miss Betty plumb in the mouth! Ya'as'm," addressing himself to the interested Mildred, heedless of the Judge's black looks, "Ya'as'm,

* The word is commonly used by the negroes in the sense of reprove or scold. † All. ‡ Little Rock.

he did knock 'er two teef plumb aout, but she jes' kep' holdin' de baby wid de one ahm an' grab up dem teef wid de torrer an' stick 'em in so dey growed back."

"Drive over to the barn, Tom," the Judge rapped out, unable to contain himself longer.

Not so, Tom; he meant to have full expression of his opinions. In a tone of pathetic sweetness he inquired, "Jedge, ain't ye willin' fo' me to do my bes' mos', t' holp ye fine aout consarnin' dis nickquity? I got important information, I has."

"Out with it, then! Make haste!"

"Ya'as, sah." If possible, Tom spoke more slowly. "I aims ter. Mist' Roger, does ye mind 'ow ye guv dat Teague de bud—cut 'im mos' in two wid you' hoss whip, longer dat ar? An' does ye mine de way de critter swar he pay you aout yit? Wa'al, he lit aout, an' we-uns 'lowed to nebber meet up wid him agin; but fo' de Lord, Jedge, dat Steve Teague ben longer dem gypsies! I seen 'im, my black seff; yes, sah. An' I lay dat debbil put dem gypsies up ter debbiltry." His eyeballs enlarged with a new glimpse of horror, and his voice sank. "Laws, Mist' Roger, does ye reckon dey cud of frowed Miss Betty in de ribber, caount er dat bein' de safes' way ter git rid er a corp?"

The Judge lifted his hand in a fury; Tom, imperturbable as he was, jumped back on the seat.

"Looked like ye fixin' to hit me," he mumbled.

"I certainly shall, if you don't go," said the Judge, sternly.

"Wall, sah, I on'y put it up you'd wanter yere ever'ting I knowed—an' I got a telegraph fo' ye."

He had the discretion to draw the slip of paper from his pocket, before the Judge could speak. "Dey telephone hit frum de station t' de sto', dis minnit," said Tom, "will I go now, sah?" And without waiting for further orders, he did go rapidly.

The Judge handed the dispatch to Mildred. She read these words: "Gypsies passed through here this morning. Had camera in one wagon." It was dated at a little village about ten miles away, and signed by the deputy sheriff.

"That Teague," said the Judge, "is capable of anything. He set fire to the mill once, and I am sure it was he who fed broken glass to my horse, this fall. And the child—do you remember the strange looks of the child? But she will *have* to confess, now!"

Mildred felt sick with horror, but she could not keep her eyes off the Judge, who was pacing the road in front of her. He turned on his heel to face her. In spite of his blood-shot eyes and the strange bluish white tint of his skin, he was absolutely composed. His next speech was uttered in a very quiet voice.

"I hope you won't say anything of this to Esmée, yet, Miss Mildred. I am going to muzzle that black fool—" he indicated the flying figure of Tom—"and then telegraph for them to arrest Teague and his companions. Then I shall go back to the Teagues and fetch the child, here, for you to examine. Mind you keep her under watch until I send you word. I shall go off on the four o'clock train to see the gypsies."

Mildred afterward wondered if she answered anything; she could only remember creeping up to her room. Passing the Judge's door, she could see that the flowers before the picture were withered.

"He has forgotten his saint," she thought, in a dull way. "Oh, poor Miss Betty, does she know?" With that, she ran into her own room, and, I dare say, was the better for her flood of tears.

Truly enough, Roger Gardiner was forgetting his saint. Perhaps there had been a good deal that was perfunctory about his worship, for years. He was an absent-minded scholar, singularly pure in his life and faithful in temperament. So ineffaceable was the memory of the awful wreck made in his heart and life by that false first love of his whose repentance, it may be, served him as cruelly as her treason; and so gradually was he eased of his pain that he continued to regard himself as an inconsolable man, a torpid recluse, some time after he was really very comfortable indeed. Little by little, he had grown to depend on Miss Betty, to consult her, aim to please her, rely on her sympathy, in short, to love her.

But he called himself only her good friend and brother. He did not even figure her as a guardian angel; there was too sad a lack of sentiment about Betty; one's guardian angel does not make jokes and frankly like good eating. Betty was his comrade, fearless and reasonable, and trusty as the best man in the world. Ah, she was more to-day! A hundred heart-shaking memories of her tenderness, her unselfish gayety haunted him. He saw her face as it looked the day his mistress betrayed him. Yesterday, he could have sworn that he did not know how Betty looked; to-day the image haunted him, the pathetic composure, the anguish of pity in the eyes. He remembered her face, again, on that wild night when poor Susy died—poor Susy who never had loved him! Why, in Heaven's name, because of her futile, piteous repentance, of that last chill kiss, must he cling to this weak ghost? A sudden, fierce light seemed to beat on his heart. If anything had happened to Betty—by the horrible stab of the thought he realized what Betty had become to him!

He did not guess even yet how long and faithfully and hopelessly Betty had loved him; he would not lift his eyes presumptuously to her soul; being hers, it was sacred.

Meanwhile Mildred was hidden in her chamber, afraid to venture out lest she should meet Esmée. After what seemed a very long time, she heard Clem's noisy little soles pattering through the hall and, directly, the thud of his small fists on her door.

"I got somefin! I got somefin of auntie's," he shouted.

Mildred opened the door. True enough, he was holding the black velveteen bag that Miss Betty kept for her plate-holders.

"I found it, *me*," he repeated proudly, "right out on the piazza, just after breakfast."

"Yes," said Esmée, appearing on the stairs; "he did. I can find nobody who knows anything about it."

"Could she have dropped it?" said Mildred.

"How could she, and we not have seen it—right under our feet! Besides, lying out there all night there would be frost on it, and it is as dry as dry. Feel it."

Mildred not only felt the cloth, she examined the bag. Within were two plate-holders and the instantaneous shutter; nothing else.

"Mildred," said Esmée in a low voice, "some one brought that bag here, *and whoever that was knows about Betty!*"

"Have you any idea who brought it?"

"Not the least bit on earth. No strange person has been seen about the premises, or at the store, either. There were only two customers before nine, in fact, our Tom and Tommy Teague——"

"Tommy Teague!" exclaimed Mildred.

"Yes, you know the Teagues who live by the creek. She came for molasses."

Mildred's head reeled. Here was a new element of mystery. Why should Tommy care to return the bag, supposing it were she? She would only increase the risk of detection. What good could it do either her or Miss Betty? At this point, her attention was brought back to Esmée, who was saying:

"Mildred, if Betty took any photographs, they are in those plate holders. You used to help her; do you know enough to get them out?"

"I can develop them. Yes. If they haven't been tampered with."

"They will tell us at least *some* place where she was," said Esmée, "and we can go there and hunt. See——" She plunged her hand into the bag and drew out the holders—"only one has the black side out, the way she leaves them after she has taken a picture. Look, Mildred, there is writing outside!"

Mildred, in indescribable agitation, read the memorandum, made out in the usual form. "Gypsy camp. 2.45 P.M. Bright Light. Inst. Ex.* Stop 25." Her trembling hands could scarcely reverse the holder to read the corresponding entry on the other side of a "Cypress Brake" taken at 3.30 P.M.

At least, Miss Betty must have left the camp safely. Mildred drew a long breath of relief.

She was as eager as Esmée to get to work. There-

* Instantaneous exposure.

fore Roger, entering the house presently, found Tempe, Norma, Tom and little Clem all trying to look through the "studio" door.

Esmée and Mildred were in the "Dark Room," a tiny closet which Miss Betty and the plantation carpenter had ingeniously partitioned off "the studio" and darkened with tar paper until only an amateur photographer could breathe in the malodorous and stifling hole. The red lantern was burning, sensibly increasing the horrors to the nose. But the plates had not been removed.

Mildred ran out and told Roger of the new clew, begging him not to go until they could examine the plates. He agreed, considering that there would still be time for the train.

She asked him about the Teagues. He had no good news. He had found the newly washed garments drying on the bushes—apparent sign that the family was not far distant. Notwithstanding, the door was barred, and not a creature, human or brute, was visible; the mules and wagon were gone out of the tumble-down shed, and a certain lop-eared Arkansas hound from his usual basking place before the door.

He inclined to Mildred's belief that Tommy Teague had brought the bag early in the morning. Her motive he could not guess. The more willingly he consented to question the negatives.

Ten minutes later the red lantern glare illumined a curious scene.

On the table lay the two plates of the "unexposed" holder, proved to hold nothing—mere blackness and glass. Before the table Mildred sat, holding and gently swaying a black rubber tray; in the tray was that which looked like a pane of glass, painted greenish white and submerged in a colorless liquid.

Faint clouds flitted over the opaque white, coming and going with the motion of the liquid. Soon there appeared something not so evanescent—a dim stain in one of the upper corners, which spread and deepened.

"The sky!" gasped Esmée.

The stain was darker and darker, almost black. Transparent white outlines shaped trees, a bank, a

flaming log, covered wagons, minute figures of horses and men and women, even children. It was like a picture on a slate, only drawn with infinite delicacy.

"The gypsy camp!" cried the Judge.

They knew, however, that Betty visited the camp; it was the next plate which they watched with the most painful solicitude.

Miss Betty had timed her exposures well; novice as Mildred was, the negative rapidly discovered itself; there were tall cypress trunks, doubled by the water that shone below, a ragged thicket of trumpet-vine, tar-blankets and bamboo-briar, huddles of cypress knees doubled like the trees, and in the foreground a great black boar lifting his dripping tusks and cruel little eyes.

"I know the place," said the Judge; "it is half-an-hour's walk from the camp. Away from the direction which the gypsies took, for Old Man Hines saw them at Mosely's Ferry between four and five. Let me see the camp again, while you fix the slash, Miss Mildred. Ah—" He was studying the wee picture with a strange expression. "Don't you see something here? These fellows are striking camp. They are putting the gears on the mules. Do you understand? Perhaps it means nothing, and perhaps a great deal. They were ready to start before Betty left them, and they must have started directly afterward, *while* she was gone, and travelled in the opposite direction——"

"Well, but I don't see the point of all that, Roger," said Esmée, bewildered.

"Never mind! I'll explain it later. There's enough point in it for me to decide to go to the camp and the slash, instead of taking the train after the gypsies."

Mildred nodded. She had followed Roger's reasoning.

"Another topic for reflection," said the Judge, "is that the sole road between the camp and the slash lies past the Teagues' cabin. Unless Betty waded ankle deep in mire, she must have passed the Teagues. As soon as we have looked at these places, I am going to follow the Teagues. We would better take Clem with

us, I reckon, or they will fill him full of their diabolical notions."

The Judge's opinion was verified the instant they opened the door by Clem's appearing in person and announcing, wide-eyed, that Aunt Tempe was "crying out loud." "Why was she crying?" "Oh 'cause auntie was dead and she'd broke the yellow bread bowl, setting it on the stove. She said wouldn't auntie have chastised her well for that, and then she hollered out 'Oh, Lordy! Oh, Lordy!' 'cause auntie never would chastise her no more! and sat down on the floor and cried *hard.*" It appeared that Tom had tried to comfort her with the suggestion that no doubt Miss Betty's ghost would be "projeckin' raoun an' chastise 'er!" But so far from comforting, he had nearly frightened Norma, the cook's helper, into hysterics; and had been driven out of the kitchen by the indignant Tempe herself.

Clem, therefore, accompanied the party. They visited the deserted camp first, finding not so much as a footprint of Miss Betty; thence, went on to the cypress-brake. Here in the soft mud they could still see the impress of two slender soles, one on the log, one below, where she had evidently clambered over to find firmer ground for her tripod. Clem was in high glee and an enthusiastic searcher; continually bringing his mother noisome relics of the gypsies' tin-can larder with the demand: "Wasn't *that* somefin of auntie's?" He had torn his clothes on the underbrush and muddied his stockings. Now, he completed the demoralization of his garments by plunging over the log after "somefin shining," and sprawling headlong in the black ooze. His uncle hauled him out, a lamentable spectacle, whimpering, "Mummy, dey *is* somefin shining!"

"You hush, you naughty boy," cried Esmée, indignantly, "look at your clothes! Please, Roger, scrape him off a little with a stick."

"But, look, mummy, dey is——"

"There are water and puddles that shine," retorted his mother, who had leaned over and pushed her own gloved hand in the hole. She wiped her fingers on her

handkerchief and adjusted her gown. Then she stooped and kissed Clem's little crest-fallen face. "There, honey, mamma knows you were doing your best to hunt. Never mind. Uncle Ro will hunt in the hole, to be sure."

But the faithfulest probing with the Judge's stick brought nothing to light. They did make out a short trail, footprints back to the road, where they were lost. Though they hunted a long while, they found no further signs.

Returning home, Esmée was the bravest of the three. The reaction from the momentary hopefulness of an apparent clew made both Roger and Mildred more despondent than before.

The Judge, indeed, could not be prevailed upon to stay when they reached home. He would only wait for a bowl of soup and a glass of wine before he rode away again in his quest for the Teagues.

There followed some dreary hours. Esmée, who continued strangely hopeful, made Mildred lie down, and served her with a cup of tea.

"How can you keep so cheerful?" she could not resist asking.

"Oh, well," answered Esmée, "somehow I can't help feeling that she has just gone off, somewhere, and will be back soon. I have, what Tom calls, a 'resentment.'"

"There goes Tom this minute," exclaimed Mildred. "Why, he is driving Peter and Ross in the buggy. Where's he going, Esmée?"

Esmée had left the room. Directly Mildred could hear Clem and his mother, outside, going through the rites of the toilet preparatory to supper. "What made her go without a word?" mused Mildred.

When Norma entered with the lamp, she asked the girl where Tom had gone.

"Dunno, ma'am," said Norma. "Sayd Miss Esmy did sen' 'im wid a telegraph."

The Judge did not return for supper. At the meal Esmée's abnormal hopefulness continued. She did not shun the subject of Christmas, and answered the child's eager: "Will auntie be here then?" with tears in her

eyes, to be sure, but in a firm, round voice: "Yes, dearie, I hope so."

After supper Mildred questioned her about Tom. Yes, Esmée answered fluently enough, he had gone to the station to get any telegrams which might be there and to make inquiries.

But wouldn't they telephone the dispatches?

Maybe, but Esmée wanted to be sure; would Mildred mind helping her with the candy-bags? They all were so behind with the Christmas work, being so anxious about dear Betty.

"She speaks as though the anxiety were ended," thought Mildred. "I never saw such strange people as Southerners are."

She could not refuse to help with the candy bags, though her fingers were twitching with nervousness. The hours crawled on, somehow. A few people, the employees of the plantation, the clerks, the engineer, the stockman, the overseer's wife, came to inquire if there was any news. Esmée grew restless as the evening waned, her cheeks flushed, she would walk to the window and look out; she was perceptibly on the alert for any sound.

For her part, Mildred was so worn out by anxiety and exertion that about ten o'clock she threw herself on the sofa, to incontinently fall asleep. She was awakened by voices and footsteps and a swift rush of fresh air through an open door.

Before the dying fire stood Roger Gardiner and the child, Tommy Teague. Roger was pale and stern, Tommy had bewept and smeared her face into a mask of miserable fright.

"Here she is," said the Judge, "she won't do anything but take on and cry, but I think a night's rest will help her to her senses."

"I didn't do nary," howls the girl, "I nev' put my eyes on Miss Betty. Oh, Lord a'mighty!"

"You never put eyes on *me?*" spoke an unforgetable voice in the hall.

Miss Betty herself stepped calmly into the room.

Behind her stepped Thomas-à-Kempis, meekly grin-

ning, having left his horses to their own forbearance. He assured Norma that for one minute "dey didn't ben nuffin' on earth 'cept huggin's and kissin's an' bellerin's!"

"Who all did beller?" cried Norma.

"Every one," replied Tom impartially, "fo' de lawd looked like I ben in a prarer-mettin'! looked like dey cudn't give Miss Betty's mouf room t' talk."

Tom's presence really was of some use, since he promptly stopped Tommy Teague at the window.

"Naw, sissy," he said softly and sadly, "I caynt turn ye loose, nohow, kase I 'low ye ben a doin' of some turrible meanness an' mos' like ye got t' go t' jail if not t' be hanged, so jes' res' easy whar ye be twell ye fin' aout!"

Tommy, seeing retribution at her throat, set up a lamentable wail.

One question of Miss Betty pierced the din: "Did none of you get my note?"

"Oh, there was a note, then?" said the Judge.

"I told you there was," cried Esmée. "*Of course!* Tommy Teague, you hush!"

"Yes, Tommy," said Miss Betty quietly, "your turn will come quick enough."

Tommy choked her sobs and stared at Miss Betty as it is supposed the victim does at the snake.

"I found," continued Miss Betty, "that I must go to Little Rock. There were some Christmas gifts. The idea came into my head. I sat down and wrote a note explaining that I should walk to the cars. That note and the camera I gave to Tommy Teague and paid her fifty cents to take them to you——"

"We never got it, Betty."

"We were so frightened, Miss Betty!"

"We had parties out all night, hunting."

The chorus made a fine medley of these sentences.

"I meant to speak to Mr. Carter, too," said Miss Betty, "but it was dark when I got there, and I barely jumped on the cars—I hadn't time to buy my ticket, even——"

"That is how they didn't see you," said the Judge.

"But we got part of your camera, Betty. If we hadn't, I should have been chasing over the country for you this minute."

Esmée explained about the plate-bag. "Who brought it, I don't know," said she.

"Tommy, of course," answered Miss Betty, cheerfully. "Come, Tommy!" to the terrified little thing; "we want the whole truth, now, and I promise you nobody shall punish you if you tell it."

"You-all won't sen' me t' jail nur guv me the bud, nur let yo' big doag t'ar me t' pieces?" gasped Tommy.

"Certainly not," said Miss Betty, touching one sharp little shoulder kindly; "poor little trick! who has been frightening you?"

Cowering at Miss Betty's feet, Tommy sobbed: "It's paw. You won't let him git me an' cut aout my tongue——"

"*Never!*" said the Judge, "we'll put him in prison, honey. And unless prison camps have changed mightily," he muttered, "he'll get even his deserts."

At that assurance, Tommy's miserable confession came on with a flood of tears. The Teagues feared their father more than anything on earth; poor wretches, the scars that he had given them would burn at the thought of him!

Teague, truly enough, was with the gypsies, but he had chanced to be at home, asleep, when Miss Betty passed his cabin. On waking, he saw Tommy setting out with the camera on her shoulder.

He strode up to her, snatched away the camera, bag and note; and out of sheer malice forbade her to mention either his theft, or her meeting with Miss Betty. He persuaded her that she was responsible for the camera, and that the Gardiners would torture the thief with prison, chains, whippings and the rest, promising her a hundred awful fates at his own hands, if she betrayed him.

"An' he sayd—ef I ben—a good gell—an'—didn't tell—" sobbed Tommy, "I cud go off t' Unk' Josh's t' —Promised Lan'—an' he'd—gimme 'lasses ever' day. Maw did cyar' me t' the cyars, but *he* fotched me back.

Oh, dear! I didn't aim t' do ye mean, Miss Betty, an' —an' paw drapped the black bag—an' I fund hit—an' I toted it back—right straight!"

"She certainly did," said the Judge, "we won't harm you, Tommy, though you have caused us some awful hours. What is *your* sentence, Betty?"

"*I* think she would better go straight into the kitchen and get something warm to eat," said Miss Betty; "riding all the evening without a bite, I'll warrant! Give her plenty of molasses, Tom."

So Tommy found mercy, which one may hope did her soul good as well as her stomach. At any rate, Mildred a little later saw her at the kitchen table placidly pouring molasses over her bread, while Tom edified a black circle with her misdeeds.

Before this Miss Betty and Roger had been left alone. Long ago, Mildred had guessed Miss Betty's secret; perhaps, now, when Roger pictured his desolation and self-reproach, something in her eloquent eyes gave a tender hint to him; also, emboldened him to open his heart.

At first she started, then she hid her crimson face in her hands. He pleaded his cause with ardor; it was natural enough for a Southerner to slip down to one knee, like the knights of old; in that attitude Mildred Cabot positively saw him, passing by on the veranda, outside.

He dared to put one arm about Miss Betty's waist. "Betty, dearest, won't you look at me, speak to me, tell me I am not too late?"

Betty let her hands fall and looked at him with painful embarrassment.

"Roger," said she, "you mustn't go on. I have to —to tell you something first."

Roger turned pale.

"No, not—this way. I can't when you hold me so."

He sprang to his feet instantly and waited.

"You can't tell me anything that shall part us," said he.

"Oh, I don't know," said Miss Betty, trembling. (Miss Betty, the gay, the imperious, trembling!) "You

were always so fastidious about ladies' appearance, and so severe on deceit. I never—it was different—if you hadn't asked me——" She grew entangled in her own sentences. "Roger," she broke out desperately, "do you know why I came home?"

"No, Betty," said the Judge.

"I came home because Esmée telegraphed me. Here is the telegram."

The Judge took the yellow paper out of her hand and read:

"*To Miss Elizabeth T. Gardiner:*
Care J. R. Downs, 300 Rock Street,
Little Rock, Arkansas.

"What you lost is found. Greatest anxiety about you. Come home at once. Tom at the station."

"What you lost!" repeated the Judge. "And Esmée! Did Esmée know, and let us have the horrible——"

"Esmée knew *nothing*," interrupted Miss Betty, "until she found—Tom had a note and a package from her for me. She told him she had a strong presentiment I was coming. He is so superstitious he believed her. It wasn't until this very evening, in the slash, Clem really first found it, but Esmée secured it without any of you all suspecting. It was out of goodness and loving kindness, to screen *me*, she kept silent when she found it. But she guessed at *once*."

"Found *it!*" cried the Judge, "in Heaven's name, what is *it?*"

Miss Betty averted her face, but he could see the crimson creeping up to the roots of her hair. In a low, broken voice she said: "It—it was my false teeth!"

Never a word said the Judge, and Betty could not see his face.

"They are only *two*," she pleaded. "Teague knocked them out. Everybody—but Esmée—thought they grew again, but they didn't; Mr. Downs made me a—a plate. And they came out while I was scrambling over that abominable log, and I couldn't find them. I dare say this mortification is a just punishment for my unchristian vanity, but it did seem to me I *couldn't* go back and

let you see me. It came to me like a flash to make a pretence of those Christmas presents and go straight to Mollie Downs.

"If I had for one second dreamed that I should cause you all such pain and anxiety, I never would have gone. I would rather have humbled myself and let you know."

"But Betty, darling," said the Judge, clasping her now without a protest, close enough to whisper the words in her ear, "Sweetheart, I *always* knew about those teeth. Downs told me all about them when he put them in!"

But I don't believe that Miss Mildred Cabot to this day can quite understand (for of course she values at its real worth Tom's preposterous tale of a presentiment) why Miss Betty departed so suddenly, or how she happened to return in time for the Christmas plum pudding.

The real and the romantic are agreeably blended in this story of life in the Vermont marble-quarries, written for ROMANCE by Arthur Beardsley Mitchell.

LILI AT THE QUARRY.

It was the noon hour and the men at the quarry were talking over the meetings at the schoolhouse, while they prepared to seek their homes. Nearly all of them were Canadian Frenchmen, and they jabbered in a patois which neither a Parisian nor an American could have wholly understood; but they found it intelligible enough among themselves, which was all that they wanted.

Josef Belair, a black-browed, brawny man of middle age, was of the opinion that the priest ought to stop the meetings. To be sure, the village of Falmount, where the good priest ministered, was two miles from the shabby little village of Rockville, usually designated as "the quarry." Therefore, "'Tisn't any of his business," insisted Leon Peristant, one of the youngest and handsomest of the group. None of the twenty or thirty men employed in the quarry had any very pronounced religious views one way or another. They had been brought up as Roman Catholics, but not strictly. Some of them had not been to confession for years.

"It wouldn't be easy to stop that young preacher, anyhow," remarked Henri Duron, another of the young men. "He's too strong, and he knows how to fight."

"Mon Dieu! that it would not," said Leon. "He is taller than Josef Belair, and he walks off like a champion runner. I heard that two young men tried to tackle him one night. They were not so steady on their pins as they might have been—they don't live many miles away from here," he winked to his companions, "but I won't call any names. All I know is that the preacher knocked them around like tenpins—a—and——"

"It's a lie!" cried a dark, ill-favored young fellow, springing forward threateningly.

"Oh, it is, is it?" taunted Henri, shrugging himself and winking again at the others. "Then of course there is nothing more to be said; but I heard that the young preacher there——"

"It is a lie!" reiterated the dark young fellow, more fiercely than before, and sidling up nearer to the good-natured Henri.

The rest of the men laughed. They were all of them in a hurry to get home to their dinners, and had been picking their way along as they had talked, but now they stopped to see what was going to happen.

"You dare not say what you were going to, Henri Duron!" continued passionately Ludovic Halet, the dark-faced, ill-favored young fellow. "You know if you did that I would knock you down in an instant!"

"All I know is," began Henri, putting up his great hands in a semi-defensive attitude, but still laughing and winking at the others, "all I know is that Josef's Lili——"

"Josef's Lili be ——," yelled Ludovic Halet, now almost beside himself with anger. "Josef's Lili is no better than she should be—no, nor his Lesbie, neither, or they would not have been where they could see, or pretend they saw, what was going on down close by Falmount on a dark night!"

"Go home, all of you, or your soup will be cold," commanded the giant Josef Belair, throwing the men to right and to left, as he strode up to Ludovic Halet, with his broad, scowling face as white as the marble in the quarry. "Because my Lili would not look at you, you young bully and drunkard, you may think it best to talk about her! I would scorn to pick a quarrel with you, you contemptible dwarf, but since you will have it, take that, you young scoundrel, and that!"

A blow from his mighty hand laid the young fellow low, and a powerful kick made him groan where he lay.

"Don't you dare to speak a word against my girls again, I warn you!" was his parting salutation, as he turned and walked sullenly away without stopping so much as to look behind him. Two or three of the

others, however, lingered. They did not know but the boy had been killed; but presently he, too, gathered himself up and walked stumblingly away, muttering imprecations under his breath.

Josef walked heavily in at the door of his humble home, washed his hands at the sink and sat down to the dinner which had been waiting some minutes for him. His seven children, of whom the Lili and the Lesbie of Ludovic Halet's conversation were the two eldest, clustered around the board, coming from the unfenced door-yard outside, and eagerly clattering their dull spoons against the sides of their yellow bowls. Their father scarcely spoke, except to growl out some word of reproof. He glowered darkly at them over his steaming bowl of thick, black bean soup. Lili and Lesbie giggled by themselves, and presently rose to finish their dinners, sitting in the doorway. When their father had concluded his meal, he went up to them and said sternly, "You want to quit this fooling 'round these evenings, you Lili and Lesbie. That Ludovic Halet has spoken of you lightly over at the quarry. I knocked him down for it, but all the same I want no more of these doings, you hear me?"

"Calm yourself, calm yourself, good father!" cried Lili merrily in French, and beginning to laugh immoderately; and "That Ludovic Halet!" said Lesbie in English. "What crooked legs he has, and his voice is like a crow's—caw, caw! He tried to kiss me at the ball at Falmount. Mon Dieu! but I boxed his ears well!"

"That you did, Lesbie!" echoed Lili, also in English.

"But no more of this fooling with these young men!" thundered their father, only half appeased by their good temper. "You go out no more with them without asking me, you hear?"

"Oh, but, good father, I shall marry Henri Duron in September," said Lesbie demurely. "He is coming to ask you to-night, and *maman* has given me her gilded comb which should have gone to Lili, only Lili is so slow about getting married. She will die an old maid, will Lili!"

"That I will!" laughed Lili, "before I marry Henri Duron or his like."

"Take care," threatened Lesbie, shaking her little fist at her sister.

Their father, to whom the news of Lesbie's marriage with Henri Duron had been most welcome, for he liked the young fellow, and had hoped for this very thing, strode off to his work in a greatly mollified frame of mind; and as he turned his back upon his daughters, Henri came sauntering along, on his way to his work also, and told the girls rapidly of the quarrel among the men just before dinner.

"I was going to knock the cur down, Lesbie, when your father came up and did it ever so cleverly. Mon Dieu! you should have been there, you two. It would have made you laugh to see the scoundrel drop down on the sharp stones. He will not feel right good for a month, I wager."

"Good, good!" laughed the gay French girls, clapping their hands and jumping up and down. Then they threw their arms around each other in an ecstasy of laughter, dancing still, and Henri flung his two arms around them both, joining in their wild dance-step.

"Let go, let go, Henri!" they shouted merrily, but still he kept on.

At just that moment, Lili looked toward the road, and her expression changed. "I tell you, let me go, Henri Duron!" she said in a low voice, and struggling with a sort of savage earnestness.

"Ho, ho! what is it?" inquired the young man, following her look. "Ah, it is Meester Emmett, that young preacher-man! And are you so afraid of him, Lili?"

"He—he spoke kindly to me," stammered Lili, straightening her plain gown, and smoothing her hair hurriedly. As she did this, the young minister lifted his hat gravely. The French girls had stopped their giggling entirely, and Lili returned his bow with a dignity which was new to her companions.

"You act scared, Lili," laughed her younger sister, a little hysterically.

Lili ignored her entirely. "Henri, I can see the boss looking at you," she hinted coldly in French. "There he goes. And there," she added with sudden wrath, "is that imp of a Stephanie, always late at school! Hurry along, you wicked child." She gave her little sister a quick push. "The others went ten minutes ago—you will be tardy."

"Oh, oh, the minister saw you out there just now with Henri, you and Lesbie," mocked the astute Stephanie, leering in infantile glee, and hopping hither and thither at a safe remove from her sister's hands. "I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself! I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself!"

"Hurry along!" commanded Lili, now growing pale about her mouth, and stern in her eyes. "There! Don't you hear the last bell?"

Stephanie turned. Henri had already gone. Lesbie marched into the house and began to clatter the yellow bowls. Lili stood still. She could hear her mother's voice querulously finding fault with something. The confusion and sordidness seemed suddenly to strike to her brain. A cloud gathered over her face, and, putting her hands to her head, she flew through the untidy living-room and up the narrow staircase behind it. Then she flung herself upon her white bed, and wept passionately, tumultuously. In a few moments the tempest had passed and left her quivering and weak.

"Lili! Lili!" called her mother. "Where is the child?"

"I am coming, mother," shouted Lili, trying to conceal the sound of tears in her voice.

"Mon Dieu! Is the girl going to sleep at this time of day?" grumbled the weary woman. "When the house has got to be put to rights and there is everything to do!"

Lili rose and looked at herself in the glass. She scowled at the plain face which she saw there. It looked to her just now, swollen and discolored as it was with the marks of her recent emotion, unendurably coarse and ugly. She traced it, swiftly but minutely, from the smooth, dark hair, which she wore brushed back plainly from her low forehead, past her large, unformed and

retroussé nose, to the thick-lipped mouth and the firm chin. Her clear, gray eyes, which were in reality her chief ornament, appeared to her small and dull.

"Oh, I am very ugly!" she moaned. "No wonder I do not get married like Lesbie. To be sure there is that despicable Ludovic, I might have had him, and Leon likes me, and then there are others, for I can dance and sing, if I *am* homely, and laugh! Oh, yes, I can laugh. One would think that I never had a serious thought. But all of these men who like me, who are they? I would not marry one of them. And no one of the kind that I should like will ever like me."

The tears coursed again down her cheeks, and at just this moment Lesbie, who had stolen softly up the stairs, burst in and saw them.

"Come, come, Lili!" she began. Then she paused. "What is it, Lili?" she went on doubtfully.

Lili, who was large and strong, caught her smaller sister by the waist, and pulled her down beside her on the bed.

"You are white and pink, Lesbie!" she sobbed, reading the simple, pretty face which was turned up to her, as though it had been a page which she was eagerly studying for the first time. "Your eyes are like blue stars, and your eyebrows are like two little clouds, to guard them. And your nose is straight, and your mouth is just right to kiss. Your hair is soft and curly. Every one who looks at you thinks 'How pretty she is!' And everybody who looks at me thinks 'How homely she is!' And yet we are sisters. Isn't it strange, Lesbie?"

Frivolous little Lesbie looked horror-stricken. She had seen Lili in strange, passionate moods, sometimes angry, sometimes elated, but never as she was to-day. What could it mean?

"I can't make you out, Lili!" she gasped at length. "Nobody ever stops to think whether your eyes are blue or not, or how your nose looks, because you are so nice, you know, and you say such odd, bright things. They all think you are a thousand times better than I am, you know they do, except Henri, Lili."

She blushed and hid her face in her sister's dress.

"I am glad you are going to marry Henri, Lesbie," said Lili wiping her eyes. "He is rough, but not so rough in his ways as the others are. They are all that way at the quarry, somehow, you know, Lesbie. But Henri will be good to you, I think, and so I like him the best of all. But nobody will ever marry me, for you see, I don't like this kind of young man"—she was talking fast now in French—"I want some one who will be fine and noble, a great deal wiser and better than I am. Now you see if I were beautiful, like you, Lesbie, I might yet be an ignorant, rude French girl, and yet he might like me, but as it is, no one ever will!" She broke down again and cried bitterly.

Her stern and despairing expression appalled her gentle, light-hearted sister. Lesbie embraced her, kissed her, and having somewhat soothed her, left her at last to go downstairs in response to her mother's repeated calls.

"Lili has a headache, mother," she said; "do not call her. I will do her work. Let her be."

The cool of the evening came on. The creaking of the great derricks and the grinding of the heavy teams, which had resounded all day throughout the little town, were still, and the men came loitering down from the vast, gaping hole in the hillside to their homes. It was a hot July day, and everybody was sitting out-doors somewhere. The five young Belairs were disporting themselves wherever they could be coolest and most comfortable. Lili and Lesbie were sitting and sewing underneath an apple-tree beside their open door, where, of course, Henri Duron and some of the other young men stopped as they went by, to talk a little. In the distance, as they were chatting, Ludovic Halet could be seen, limping toward the little cottage nearly a mile away, where he lived with his widowed mother, who was said to be as cross-grained and vicious as he was.

"He has kept still enough since your father shut him up this morning, Lili," said Louis Verrel, one of Henri's boon companions.

"That's good," she said sharply. "It served him right, and yet I don't just know what it was all about."

"Oh," began Henri uneasily, "we were talking about that young preacher who comes up from Battleville and holds meetings in the schoolhouse, and I was telling the others how he knocked down Ludovic and that other rascal from Falmount, when they fell on him in the dark—you told us about it, you know."

"Of course we did," affirmed Lesbie proudly. "Lili and I had been to Falmount, and we saw the whole thing. We stopped to gossip with those Ligny girls who used to live here, and it was dark before we knew it, and we were hurrying along as fast as we could, and we saw it as plain as could be. It was about half-past nine, wasn't it, Lili?"

"Yes," answered Lili. Her voice was almost forbidding. She began to understand the situation.

"Well, he said it was a lie," continued Henri shortly.

"Oh—h, it wasn't!" chirped Lesbie, again.

"But why did my father think it necessary to knock Ludovic down, just for that?" asked Lili, coldly.

"Oh, it was one of those trifles that men get angry about," explained Henri, equivocally.

"Tell us what was said, Henri—what was said that made my father angry," demanded Lili fiercely.

"Oh, nothing—nothing much," replied Henri, as the others, with a light "au revoir" left him alone with the girls. "He implied that you girls were liars."

"And that we were not good," supplied Lili bitterly. "I am glad my father knocked him down, and yet Lesbie and I have been down to Falmount too much to those dances, and we have been too free. I am going to the meetings, and I am going to stop being so wild."

Henri laughed.

"You are good enough, Lili," he said affectionately, "There are no better girls than you and Lesbie in the village."

"But we have been too free," still insisted Lili gloomily, "and I am going to be different now."

"And you will not let Leon kiss you again?" teased Henri slyly.

"Never!"

"Ah! but I saw him kiss you, very fondly, only the other night at the door here!"

Lili flushed darkly.

"I know it," she confessed sadly, "but it was the last time. Leon is very handsome, and he teased me for a kiss, and I was very excited and gay, and it did not seem to be so wrong and foolish as it does now. Girls should not allow such liberties unless they are engaged to be married. If they do, it is no wonder that mean men like Ludovic Halet say hateful things about them."

"Ah, Lesbie!" pleaded the young man in assumed dismay, "you are not going to reform like Lili, are you? Please don't!"

Lesbie laughed back to him and flushed all over her pretty face, while Lili answered quickly, "It is well enough when people are going to get married so soon, but these French girls around here, they are too free. I did not use to think they were so coarse and loud, but they are, and I have been coarse and loud myself, but I shall not give Mr. Ludovic Halet any chance to speak lightly of me again; you shall see. Are you going to the meeting, Lesbie?"

"Oh, no," said Henri promptly. "I shall not let her go to the meeting. Besides, I have promised to talk with your father to-night."

The two lovers fell into talk and laughter with each other, and Lili slipped away. Presently she passed down the street with her younger brother, Jean. She had persuaded him to go to the meeting with her.

The village schoolhouse was a very old one. The quarry had been in operation for fifty years, off and on, and the schoolhouse had been built shortly after the quarry had been opened.

It contained six rows of desks, with six in each row. The front desks and seats were low; but the back ones were so high that grown-up people could sit comfortably in them.

Lili and Jean found the schoolhouse nearly full. They were obliged to find places among the low seats in the very front. Most of the audience consisted of

women and children, though there were a few men. The young preacher was already in his place and was giving out a hymn. He led the singing with a sweet, rich voice, which was almost like the contralto of a woman. As he sang, his fine, firm face, on which he wore a full, closely-trimmed beard and moustache, seemed to become illuminated. He might have been twenty-seven or eight years old.

His prayer, and the brief talk which he gave afterward, were listened to attentively, almost eagerly. Lili bent forward to catch every word.

Thanks to the little schoolhouse, every child in the village could read and write. Josef Belair had tried to give his children as good a "chance" as he could, but Lili had been the eldest, and her mother had needed her at home, so that since she was twelve years old she had not been to school; but she had a bold, quick mind, and the village people said that Josef Belair had no son who would ever be so "capable" as Lili. She had been so full of spirits and laughter always, that she had seemed to bubble over like an overflowing brook, but since she had been to these meetings at the schoolhouse and had heard the young minister preach, she had had moods of seriousness, and spiritual glimpses such as she had never known before.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Emmett invited all those who would like, to stay and have a few words of prayer and conversation with him. Nearly everybody staid, but Jean did not wish to. Lili tried to persuade him. "I do not wish to go home alone," she whispered to him pleadingly.

"Oh, what's the reason?" snapped the boy ill-naturedly. "You generally don't mind it."

"Well—it isn't nice, so long as I don't need to," persisted Lili. "Just wait around for me outside—do."

"Maybe," said the boy sullenly, and he hurried out.

"And you, too, want to lead a better life?" said the young minister as in his round he reached Lili.

"Oh, I do, I do!" she almost sobbed. Her plain face was illumined by her emotion. The young man knelt and prayed with her. Then he passed on.

At the close of the little "after-meeting," which had been protracted longer than Lili had thought, she hurried outside to look for Jean, but he was, naturally, nowhere to be seen. The clock in a neighboring house struck ten, and the strokes sounded very loud through the open windows. It seemed to Lili to have grown unaccountably dark. The people at "the quarry" were believers in the proverb beginning, "Early to bed and early to rise." Many of the houses in the vicinity of the schoolhouse were already quiet for the night, and others were "shutting things up," with the careless, familiar parade of a country place. The schoolhouse stood only a little way from Josef Belair's cottage, not an eighth of a mile. In the daytime, the children ran fearlessly up and down the rough, wooded little hill upon which it stood, in any one of a half-dozen crooked paths; but in this dimness, Lili could only go around by the road. Only six or seven others had staid as late as she, and at the foot of the hill these all turned and dispersed in different directions. She said good-night to them and hastened toward her home. She had gone only a few steps when she met her father. He was not a drunkard, but nearly every man in the village drank more than was good for him, and to-night Josef had been taking a glass too much, perhaps in honor of his daughter's betrothal.

"Is that you, Lili?" he asked thickly, as he came up to her and peered into her face. "What are you doing out in the street at this time of night? Didn't I tell you that this fooling had got to stop?"

He spoke in French, and the girl replied in the same tongue. "Jean went with me, father, but he would not wait for me to come home. I told him to stay, but he would not mind."

"Stay? What should he stay for?" demanded Josef Belair angrily. "Do you want to keep your little brother up all night? Take that for your impudence!"

He raised his hand to strike her, but it was caught quickly from behind, and never descended.

"I do not stand by and see a woman struck in my presence," said the voice of the young preacher.

Josef Belair uttered a string of curses. "And who are you," he thundered in French, "who dares to interfere between me and my disobedient girl?"

At the sound of his belligerent voice, doors and windows in the vicinity began to light up, and heads were thrust out into the darkness.

"This will never do!" said the young man hurriedly. "Forgive me, Miss Lili. I meant only to save you from a blow. I hope I have not been the means of making you the target of the village talk."

"Thank you," she whispered nervously, "I think I can manage him. It is not the first time he has tried to strike me since I was grown up. Please go as quick as you can."

He lifted his hat with a hasty word of peace to Josef Belair, who stood muttering French oaths and shaking his fist stupidly after his unexpected assailant, as he disappeared into the darkness.

"Come!" breathed Lili into his dull ear. "Hurry, father! Come along!"

The effervescence of his maudlin wrath had passed off. He still rubbed the arm which had been so roughly handled, but he stumbled obediently enough along beside Lili, and was presently fast asleep in bed. Henri and Lesbie were courting under the apple-tree, and Lili did not think it worth while to tell them what had happened. Her whole being was in a tumult of wrath and of mortification, mingled with something else which she could not describe.

The next few days were like a dream to her. Her feet seemed scarcely to touch the floor as she went about her work. She sang constantly the sweet, simple strains which she had heard at the meeting.

It happened that at just this time the good old priest from Falmount came over to look after some of the sick people. A neighbor told him that Lili had been attending the meetings at the schoolhouse. He shook his head and stopped in a moment to see her.

"You have not been in to confession for many months, my child," he said sadly.

"Oh, no, father!" returned Lili laughing. "It is

a long way to go—two miles through the dust or mud."

She was in her maddest and merriest spirits, and the old priest looked kindly upon her.

"But you are very strong and well, my child."

"I am ever so strong and well, father, but I don't like to go to Falmount these hot days. There! my mother is calling me. Good-bye!" and she darted away.

The old man shook his head as he walked off. The parish at Falmount needed a younger man, he said to himself sadly. His flock was headstrong and inclined to wander. He felt too old to look after them properly.

It was a week before young Mr. Emmett came again to the quarry. Then Lili was afraid that her father would hear of the meeting and forbid her going; but if he knew of it, he said nothing, and this time she went early so that she should not have to sit in the front row of seats. She could not get anybody to go with her, but she made up her mind that she would leave early, and with some of the neighbors who lived very near her father's house.

Again the young preacher, with his earnest face and his magical voice, threw a good spell upon the simple people in the schoolhouse, and again nearly all of his audience remained to talk and pray with him. Lili was in tears when he reached her side.

"I did not see that I had been so wicked," she sobbed. "I am going to be different now—I am going to be like you."

"Oh, no!" he protested, alarmed at the effect of his preaching upon this ardent young soul. "You mean like Christ. I am as full of faults as you yourself. I fight them all the time."

"Oh, no," she persisted with all the enthusiasm of a *devotée*, "I understand now just what Christ was. He was like you."

The tears rose to the young man's eyes. To do him justice, he was not as conceited as most men of his age. The girl had sincerely shocked him, and he felt that all he could do was to pray. Lili covered her eyes reverently, but in her hot heathen soul she prayed more to

this gentle, refined preacher, whose manliness and high sentiments had captured her mind, than to any being in the heavens. Perhaps her attitude was not offensive in the sight of the Wisest. She was worshipping what she believed to be perfection just as much as the veriest orthodox divine adores what he believes to be perfection.

When the prayer was finished, she rose to go away. The others rose also, and they all passed out together, singing softly in unison the last hymn. It made talking unnecessary, and they did not feel like talking.

The young minister lingered a moment to put out the light and to lock the door, but presently, as Lili was following along after the others, buried in her own thoughts, while she still chanted the sweet refrain, "Till we meet, till we meet," he came up beside her.

"You had no more trouble with your father the other night, I hope," he said kindly as he reached her side.

"Oh, no." Lili felt her face grow red in the darkness with shame at the remembrance.

"I hope that he does not often strike you."

"Oh, no."

"Can you not get him to come to the meetings?"

"No, I cannot get any of them at home to come with me."

"I do not understand how you happen to come."

"Oh," she answered slowly, "I am different from the others. I saw you, and I made up my mind that I would like to be the way you are, if I only knew how, and then I went, and I liked it. I liked to hear you talk, and then I really began to want to be better, and I was ashamed to have you see me doing the things I used to do, and talking as I used to."

"But you seem to be very gay. I hear that you are fond of dancing and parties. I scarcely see how this serious life has come to seem desirable to you."

"Oh, something—something in me——" faltered Lili.

"Yes, yes," he urged eagerly.

"Oh," she burst forth, encouraged by his sympathy, "something in me is very sick of this gay life I have led, and the people all seem so loud and coarse to me,

and I feel as though I could never go with the young men and dance with them again. I have been too free with them," she continued, looking appealingly into his eyes, as they passed through a shaft of lamplight from one of the village houses, "I have been wild and gay, but nothing worse. You do not think I am very bad, do you?"

"Oh, no, no," he answered kindly, and a little startled by the sudden earnestness with which she asked the question.

They had reached the poor cottage of the Belairs, and Lili turned to go up to the door. As she did so, she raised her face to him again, and said, "Living is a different thing to me from what it ever was before you talked so and made things so plain."

"I am so glad!" he rejoined, with the unconsciousness of a man who is utterly absorbed in a great purpose. "A real religious spirit transforms everything more and more. It can make the hardest things easy to do. You will find it so. Only be faithful. May God help you. Good-night."

He lifted his hat to the poor, plain French girl as though she had been a duchess, and she stood in the door looking after him in a sweet bewilderment as he walked off through the night.

The next week and the next there were other meetings. For four weeks more they continued, and Lili was always there, but the young minister never walked home with her again. More people came to the meetings, and there was always some one for Lili to go with.

Then Mr. Emmett came no more. Another man was sent in his stead, an old man, kind-voiced and earnest, but by no means the same. He said that Mr. Emmett was ill from overwork. He had tried to do not only the regular duties of a parish in Battleville, a large town more than thirty miles from the quarry, but to go off into the byways and hedges two or three times a week and do missionary work, and it had been too much for him. Now he was going away on a long trip. His people insisted upon sending him. They hoped, the old preacher said, that he would be able when he re-

turned to resume his usual work again, but they would not let him take up this outside preaching. He was too much prized by his people to be sacrificed to what they considered his fanatical ideas.

Lili went still with great regularity to hear the preaching, and tried to live up to the lofty standard which she had conceived in her early religious experience. Those who thought that she, like some of the other young girls, had been carried away only by the handsome face and muscular prowess of the young minister, had to concede that she was true to the teachings of his successor as well. During the following year a little church was built at the quarry, and it continues unto this day.

Lesbie and Henri Duron were married during September, and went to live in a few rooms above the little village store. It was not far away, but Lili, who fondly loved her pretty sister, missed her wretchedly.

"Get up, get up, Lili!" said her mother to her, half-crossly, half-pityingly, as the girl sat one soft Indian summer day upon the rough doorstone. "Don't sit moping there all day. Mon Dieu! how sober you are lately. You used to laugh until I was tired of the sound. Now it is sigh, sigh all day—so!"

The thin-faced French woman drew her mouth down and sighed heavily. Then she laughed, half-afraid, into Lili's eyes. There was a stern patience there which her mother did not understand.

"I—I am very lonely," said Lili. Her voice was gentler than usual, and her mother's heart softened toward her.

"Nonsense! Then go and see Lesbie," she laughed.

Lili rose slowly.

"Why did you want me to get up? I thought the work was all done."

"Yes, but I do not want to see you moping about on the doorstone. People will think you are jealous because Lesbie got married and you didn't. You must stir about, Lili, and get a husband yourself."

"I have told you before, mother, that I shall never have a husband," said Lili coldly.

"Tut, tut!" reproved her mother.

"No," repeated Lili firmly. "I shall not marry any of the young men around here. Leon is the best of them, not a perfect boor as the rest are, but even he can do nothing but work in the quarry and dance. One would like a man who can say something sensible and who knows something."

"It is said that you put on airs above your neighbors, Lili," remarked her mother severely. "It is said that you are only Josef Belair's daughter, and you have no business to hold yourself off so, and God knows you are not as you used to be. And, Lili, you are nineteen years old, come Candlemas."

"I know it well," retorted Lili, the meaning in her mother's words touching her keenly, "and I know, too, that Stephanie and Louise are large enough to help you about the work and if I can get no husband to support me, I had better support myself. I have thought of it, and I mean to do it. I am strong, and as soon as my new gown is done, I am going down to Battleville to work in one of the mills. If I cannot get work in a mill, I can work in somebody's kitchen."

"I do not want you to go, my daughter, but your father thinks there are a good many mouths to feed."

"Oh, I know that I ought to go, now that the extra work about the wedding is over with. My father is right. He is a poor man, and he cannot keep so many."

"I should not mind it so much," said the older woman sadly, "if only you had some religion, Lili."

"I've got plenty of religion," retorted Lili, in anything but a sanctified tone, "and I hope to have more, and you mustn't speak that way again, mother. I don't want to hear it."

The talks between Lili and her mother often ended in something like this, though they had never before had so plain an understanding in regard to Lili's departure from home. Now Madame Belair got up in a huff, crossed herself with a provoked "humph," and went her way.

As Lili had said that she would, she went in a few days to Battleville. A cousin of her mother's lived

there, and she stayed with his family until she had found a place to work. She could not get into a mill, but she accepted a situation as a maid-of-all work, and entered upon her duties so energetically that before long she was firmly established there.

Mr. Emmett had not returned from his health-trip when she first went to Battleville, but she attended his church every Sunday, and just before Christmas he came back, and she heard him preach again.

The church was crowded that Sunday. It was the most fashionable church in town, and everybody in it seemed to think as much of the young pastor as Lili did. She felt, when she heard him speak, as though she could not wait until the conclusion of the service to greet him, and tell him how she had come to live in Battleville now, and how glad she was that he was well again; but when the benediction was fairly pronounced, there was such a rush of people to see him that, after waiting a little while, she was discouraged and went slowly home.

The next Sunday she lingered again. She tried to catch his eye, with a sort of a feeling that, if she could once do that, he would come up to her, and take her hand in his old, kind way, and say, "Why, Lili, is this you, and how did you happen to be here, and have you been faithful?" Perhaps he would walk a little way with her, a very little way. Her heart beat with twice its usual force all through the service, and she felt full of courage, but at the end, in spite of her lingering, she felt her bravery oozing away, and at last she went home again without speaking to him. It seemed so presumptuous to go up to him among all the others, so rich and well-dressed. And how they would stare at her! She could not endure it. And he had probably forgotten her, so many things had happened since last summer. It seemed years ago, even to her.

Every Sunday, however, she went to hear him preach, and she felt the same uplift from his words that she had felt from the preaching in the old schoolhouse. She tried to be "faithful" with all her might. The people with whom she lived did not attend his church, so that

he never came to that house. Little by little, she gave up the thought of ever speaking to him. Still she hoped that some time she should meet him on the street and that he would spy her out and smile at her; but she went out seldom. It was a hard winter for her. She was not used to working for strangers, and she got tired, though they were kind people enough. Once in awhile she went home for a day. She could go in the cars to Falmount, and it was not a long walk from there to her home, in spite of what she had used to tell the good old priest.

"You grow so thin!" said her mother as Lili came home one bright winter's day. "Mon Dieu, Lili! I shall have you come home to stay if you grow so thin. Your cheek-bones are almost pricking through the skin."

"Yes, I don't feel right," admitted Lili. "They had me see the doctor, and he said I had malaria."

"Well, you had best get over it right soon, daughter, or I shall surely have you come home to stay. I need you. Stephanie and Louise are lighter and lazier than even you and Lesbie used to be, and the boys never tore their clothes as they do this winter."

She sighed. She was truly worried about Lili, who, in spite of Lesbie's beauty, had always been her favorite. There was something uncommon about Lili, something deeper and finer than in anybody that the poor mother had ever seen, and she was secretly proud of this strange girl. She knew that the neighbors admired her, too, in much the same way, though it was their fancy to sneer good-naturedly at her turned-up nose and her freckles and her big mouth. The mother could not bear to see Lili looking what the neighbors called "meachin'," and above all not to hear her laugh. Lili had always been such a girl to laugh!

But Lili did not stop growing thin. She had a hard cough, too. The doctor thought she ought to stop working, but Lili would go on with her work, and nothing could keep her from attending church. Still, she had never spoken with the young pastor, and she knew almost nothing about his life. The few girls with whom she was acquainted in the town went to the

Catholic church, and she never talked with anyone else outside of the house where she lived.

One April morning she went forth on an errand. Her path lay by the church. It was open, and many people, all looking very happy and busy, were hurrying in and out. Wagons heaped with evergreens and flowers were unloading before the door.

A few moments later, she met a girl whom she knew, a good-natured Irish maiden named Nora.

"An' are yez goin' to the gran' weddin' the night, Lili?" asked Nora.

"Who is going to be married?"

"An' the craytur niver guessed whin it's her own priest is goin' to be married—yer own Mr. Emmett, Lili! An' he's goin' to marry the daughter of Judge Davis who lives over on the hill beyant, an' niver so gran' a weddin' in the town, milady says."

"Where will it be, Nora?"

"An' sure it's in the church, I heard tell, at siven o'clock the very night, an' then there'll be a great reception at the Judge's house beyant, an' then the young folks'll go off somewhere on their weddin' journey. Oh, it's great toimes for Battleville, Lili."

Lili went home and did her work as usual, but she got permission to slip away in the evening for the wedding. She was able to get to the church early enough to secure a good seat in the gallery, and there she waited in a sort of dream for the ceremony to take place.

There was a vast crowd present, and the perfume of the flowers was overpowering. A perfect forest of Easter lilies was grouped about the altar. There was a sheen everywhere of satin and of jewels. It was said that all of the fashionable people within a hundred miles of Battleville had come to the wedding.

Presently Lili heard the music playing—she saw Mr. Emmett come out and stand by the altar, and a tall, fair girl, with her thin white veil streaming around her, and leaning on the arm of a dignified, gray-haired man, came up the aisle to meet him, followed by a troop of gayly-clad maidens. She heard a sound of talking and

marked the hush of the music. Then everything swam before her eyes, and she fainted dead away.

Nobody in her vicinity knew who she was. She was carried at once to a little hospital which had been built in connection with the "town farm." There after a while she came out of her unconsciousness, but by that time she was in a raging fever and very ill.

In a day or two, as was inevitable in so small a place, it was discovered who she was, and her mother was sent for, but when she had come, Lili did not recognize her. She was ill, as it seemed, unto death.

The fever ran for about a fortnight, but one day she opened her eyes sanely, and the good nurse who was bending over her saw that she was quite herself again. She spoke faintly, but in French.

"I don't know French," said the nurse kindly; so Lili began again in English. "I thought you were my mother. Wasn't my mother here?"

"Yes, but you did not seem to know her, and she had to go home again, for she said there was so much work to do."

Lili lay still for a moment. Then she asked, "Did I go to a wedding?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Emmett's wedding?"

"Yes."

"And then what happened?"

"It was very hot and close, and there were a great many flowers, and you fainted away. Your mother said you hadn't felt well all winter."

"No," said Lili feebly, "they said I had malaria."

"I wouldn't talk any more," counselled the nurse. But presently the sick girl spoke again.

"Has Mr. Emmett got back from his wedding journey?"

"Oh, my, yes. He was married on a Monday, and he was gone over one Sunday and then got back on the next Saturday night."

"I wonder if he would come and see me."

"I don't know as you ought to have anybody come to see you. You're dreadful weak."

"I don't think it will hurt me. I don't believe I am going to get well anyway, so what is the difference?"

"Oh, don't talk that way!" cried the horrified nurse. "You're going to get well, and you ought to want to get well, young as you are."

"But I don't," sighed Lili.

"You ought to want to get well," persisted the nurse not unkindly. "You've got work to do in the world. I can see that."

A faint color came into Lili's cheeks. The subtle flattery of the nurse's words seemed to dash a wholesome shower of pure water upon the sentimental flame which had burned within her for so long. She lay still and thought, and said nothing.

A day or two later, when she was getting able to sit up, she asked again if she might not see Mr. Emmett. A note was written to him, and the very next morning he came around to the hospital. Lili was propped upon pillows to receive him. Her illness had spiritualized her face. It was very fair, and her clear gray eyes looked large and serious. The strong French cast of her face, which had been very apparent in health, was modified now. She knew that she looked very different from the Lili of the little quarry village, and she was not surprised when the young minister did not recognize her. She had not allowed her name to be mentioned in the letter.

"I am Lili—Lili Belair—don't you remember—at the quarry?" she said when he had taken her hand and gazed at her in a puzzled way for a moment.

"Oh, yes," he said with a brightening face. "Poor girl! Of course I remember you, and that night when your father—when he was so angry. And those beautiful meetings at the schoolhouse! I am so glad to hear that there is a church there. But you have been very ill. Tell me about it."

She went on and told him about her life in Battleville, her desire to attend his wedding, and how she had been taken ill there, and now how she believed that she was going to die. Her eyes filled with tears. She was "glad to go." There did not seem to be "anything to

live for here," but he interrupted her with a fine color on his face which showed that his happy young heart had divined the secret which she would have died rather than betray, and which she had never fully allowed, even to herself.

"You are wrong, Lili," he said firmly. "You are going to get well, and you are going to do a great work in the world."

"Oh, no," she interrupted him to say weakly, "I have no work to do in the world, not of any account. I am tired of working down here, and I have thought of going back to the quarry, and helping my mother there, and I am very good at making boys' clothes. My mother was a tailoress, and she has taught me, and I like it, and I could get plenty to do around there and in Falmount, but that is not a 'great work,' it is very small."

"But you will marry, and you will be a tower of strength to your husband. I was struck up at the quarry with your firmness in following what you thought to be your duty, and the noble way you went about it. You had influence there. I could see it. And now if you could go back and live among those people and keep true to yourself, as I know you will——"

"But I shall never marry!" she cried in almost her old voice and with the old passionate earnestness.

"Well, suppose you do not marry," he went on, the color flaming into his handsome face again, "you have still a great work to do. There is that little church—and the people. You complained, I remember, that they were loud and coarse. You can teach them a better way. You can elevate the tone of the place. You used to be merry and light-hearted. I shall never forget seeing you whirling about in front of your father's house with some other young people one day, and thinking what a merry girl you were."

"Oh-h!" sighed Lili, "I was so ashamed that day!"

"But you were very sweet and innocent in what you did," pursued the young man kindly, "and you have that sort of a mind, I am sure, a good, gentle, cheerful, dutiful mind, as well as a strong one. Your plan is ex-

cellent. You must go back to the quarry and go to work."

He knelt by her bedside and prayed with her, and talked with her about her religion. He told her that he would send a friend of his to see her again, but he could not come himself for a good while, because he was so busy. Then he went away, bidding her at the last to be good and get well as fast as she could.

That talk with the young minister marked an epoch in Lili's life. She ceased to mope and pine for she knew not what. She thought of what she would do in the village at the quarry. She could hardly wait to get well. Then she did indeed go home, and before many months she was able to put her plan into execution. And Leon was the one who helped her in everything—who saw that she did not go home alone from the meetings, who walked to Falmount to buy cloth for the coat she wanted to make for Jean, who petted Lesbie's baby and was so tender with it; and it was Leon who remarked that any good man could get the girl he loved by waiting long enough for her and being very, very good to her, so long as she did not marry somebody else. And the old gay life went on at the quarry, the homely day-to-day life of us all, tempered always in Lili by the real purpose of her intense soul to constantly lift up the people and be on the good side of everything. But under the bustle of these days, buried far away out of the sight of everybody, Lili's romance is laid away in her heart, wrapped forever in the sweet airs of summer evenings, with the shadowy, idealized face of the young preacher shining through the golden haze, the clasp of his blameless hand, the suffocating thrill when he came up beside her, the unnamed, unnamable ecstasy—all are there—laid away, Lili says to herself, with her youth, which seems to her gone, though she is but in her twenties. Sometimes she sings to herself the song:

> "When youth, the dream, departs,
> It takes something from our hearts,
> And it never comes again."

But Leon does not miss it. He thinks that Lili is more lovely than ever.

It is hard to believe that the worthy Congamel, in the following story by Frantz Perréal (translated from the French for ROMANCE by H. L. B. Porter), really did keep his funny secret very long from his mystified fellow-citizens. If he did, they have good reason to resent the losing of an excellent joke.

MOUCHETTE.

If that evening, the night before Christmas, you could only have seen Congamel, the park-keeper, you would have said from the long strides he was taking that Satan was pursuing him. The shadow of two small, pointed ears, and a long goatee, which profiled themselves upon the stony soil which the moon silvered, would have aided this supposition. These immemorial attributes of Satan had, however, nothing frightful in them in this instance, for they were only a part of the ornaments of Mouchette (little pet), just now following her master, who led her after him by a cord; her neck was painfully stretched, and with her four little hoofs she made a great effort to keep up with the long steps of her master. Capricious, like all of her family, at times she would try to stop or at least to slow down, but Congamel would soon call her to order by shaking the leash, invariably accompanied by a "Come, come, Mouchette!" and Mouchette would move on.

This Congamel was certainly the busiest man in Valcouvent. In addition to his duties of park-keeper, he also performed those of town-crier and chorister.

It was he also whose business it was at nightfall to make a round of the church, to drive forth before shutting the doors any stray dogs who might have dared to defy the regulations. But he showed in this delicate operation so much tact and paternal goodness that on the masses of feast days his Kyrie, his Allelulia and his Introit had no greater admirers than the setters, poodle-dogs and spaniels which came to him as if it were a matter agreed upon, to hear his eloquent invocations and his vigorous chants. There they always

were on the pavement, gravely sitting upon their haunches, and when the well-known voice sounded, they barked in interminable chorus, "Aa! Ee! Ii!"

These dogs, patterns of deference, smacked their canine lips and seemed to say, "Truly, Congamel possesses remarkable talent, and with such a voice he ought to be able to bark admirably!"

The industry of Congamel stopped not with the dogs. To him also belonged the care of regulating the town clock in the square tower of the church—"A beautiful clock, upon my word!"

From very far away the good people came to regulate their own clocks by that at Valcouvent.

Congamel was also very proud of showing the clock to visitors, as proud as if he had been especially selected by destiny to keep guard of the march of the hours.

One day on reaching the church Congamel remembered that the clock needed to be wound. The weights had fallen very low. One of them, in truth, almost touched the ground.

Congamel on this occasion, having fastened his goat, climbed, four steps at a time, the winding staircase leading to the platform above, on which was placed the clock, wound it up, placed the weights in good position and then descended. But when he arrived at the last step, he perceived that his goat was no longer in the place in which he had left her. Supposing she had managed to untie herself, he sought her in every space and corner, but alas! Mouchette was nowhere to be found.

"Some one has stolen my goat!" he groaned. "Can it be that that confounded Piquébosse has played me this trick?" Thereupon he ran swiftly to the house of Piquébosse, who solemnly swears that he "has never seen his goat."

"I am in a pretty mess!" growled Congamel. "I cannot afford to lose my goat! It was a true fountain of milk, which brought me more than twenty sous each day. Well, go and work yourself to death, Congamel! Cry yourself hoarse through the streets! Chase the dogs, sing the masses, ring the vespers, wind the clock,

run over the fields! What labor I must go through before I shall be able to purchase another Mouchette!"

Weeping, Congamel re-entered his house, and put himself in the chimney-corner, awaiting the moment when he was to go again to the church, to announce with a beautiful volley of bells the midnight mass.

Ah! when he rang forth "Glory in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men," it would bring little joy to his heart. His would be a sad Christmas feast! His grief was fearful to be seen. He remained there long hours, taking no account of time.

Suddenly the face of Congamel expressed incredible fright. The clock was striking, striking right along. One! Two! Three! Four! It sounded eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, thirteen o'clock, fourteen o'clock. On it went!

"Holy Virgin and Divine Mercy!" cried Congamel. "Misfortunes never come single. Such a clock! The pride of Valcouvent! It is certainly delirious. It has gone crazy, and raves like an old witch."

Yet still the clock continued to give forth its strokes. You might have thought it was ringing a knell for the soul of poor Mouchette. The terrified Congamel ran immediately to the church, where already many people had assembled, looking stupidly at the hands of the clock, which at full speed were dancing on the dial a frolicsome waltz, while the hours struck, struck without ceasing.

"Jesu Maria! what is going to happen to us?" cried these bewildered spectators. "Surely some malicious deity has taken possession of the clock!"

The two enraged hands stopped at midnight; a noise as of a rattle spoke sharply once again, strident as a diabolical laugh. Then the hours stopped striking. At this point, a never-to-be-forgotten vision, a fantastic apparition, appeared upon the top of the tower, going and coming, leaping and bounding as though seeking some opening for escape.

The children cried "Lost!" the women fell fainting, and the most courageous inhabitants of Valcouvent ran for their dwellings as fast as they could go.

Alone Congamel waited. He alone understood this mystery. He saw that he had just refound his goat, which he had managed to lose by a most singular accident. It will be remembered that, before climbing up to wind the clock, he had taken the precaution to fasten Mouchette, but in a moment of abstraction he had knotted the leash of the poor animal to one of the great weights of the clock. Thus when he wound the machinery, he had hoisted his poor pet as high as the platform. There, suffocating and half strangled, she had landed upon her feet. By pulling, the leash had tightened round her neck like an iron collar, and as she twitched at it, had made the bells sound continuously during the last quarter-of-an-hour. And, free at last, it was she who had frightened the good people of Valcouvent, who remembered for a long time this famous Christmas Eve.

There was not a resident of the town, small or great, who did not stoutly affirm that he had seen Beelzebub in flesh and blood.

As for Congamel, he seized Mouchette, embraced her fondly and rewound the clock, all the better because, although it had a tongue, it could not tell a word of his adventure to any one. The true Southerner follows that wise maxim of Pittacus: "It is best to hide good fortune, and above all, foolishness."

It was a genuine loss to good literature when Theodore Bartlett, the author of the following touching tale, died some years ago in his early prime. He left behind him only a single volume of short stories, from which volume this beautiful sketch is taken.

THE CHARITY BALL.

KITTY had been to the charity ball, and the charity ball was very fashionable; there was no doubt about that. Kitty had eaten a late supper, returned home, gone to bed and to sleep; there was no doubt as to that either. She recollected distinctly throwing one shoe under the bed and the other into a corner, saying "Good-night" to her own image in the looking-glass, twisting the figure of a butterfly till her fingers ached, before she discovered that it was not the gas-stopper, and then laughing sleepily at all her mistakes. She even remembered the first dream of her sleep, which was something about charity diamonds, chicken-salad lancers and ice-cream waltzes.

No; there was no doubt that she had gone through all this; yet there she was, staring in at the window of the great ball-room, and the ball was but just commencing. Could she have gone to sleep on the window-sill in some mysterious manner? No; she was outside, and standing in the air, with somebody holding on to her hand!

"Oh, dear," thought Kitty, mournfully, "I must have drunk some wine somehow. How strange it is! I wonder how I came here! But what a cold hand holds mine! It's not papa's, for it makes me shiver. He must be horrid. I won't look at him. So!"

There did not seem to be much need of the resolve, however, for the person who held her hand did not move nor seem to care whether she saw him or not, but quietly looked in with her. So, at last, like most girls, Kitty's curiosity got the better of her, and she cautiously glanced out of the corners of her eyes.

Beside her she saw an old man. His beard and hair were long and white, and dropped about his neck and shoulders, like falling snow. Upon his head was lightly placed a crown, as of frostwork, so delicate was its texture. Robes, long and dark, and cold to look at, fell in broad folds from his shoulders, and were held to his waist by a girdle of twinkling stars. He was gazing in at the brilliant assemblage with a sad, melancholy expression upon his face.

Kitty looked at his robes.

"How very old-fashioned!" she thought, "and aged, very aged."

"Yes," murmured the old man; "old, very old."

Kitty started. He read her thoughts, evidently. She was sorry now she had thought it, he looked so sad.

"Who are you?" asked Kitty, timidly; "and why have you brought me here?"

"I am the Cold Night," said the old man, slowly turning his eyes toward her. His eyes were sharp and piercing, yet full of kindness. "And I have brought you here that you might see how great your charity is, for I heard this was a charity ball."

"Yes," said Kitty nervously.

"I am a friend of the poor," continued the Cold Night; "and I love to see charity." He looked back into the ball-room as he spoke. "You see all your friends here?"

"Yes," said Kitty, brightening up, and gazing inside with something of a proud look. "There's Florry Hall right before the window now. She has those beautiful solitaire diamonds in her ears. Oh, dear, how bright they look! I wish I had them."

"But you had the handsomest dress," said the Cold Night, sadly.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Kitty, quickly. "It was of the richest silk, and cost several hundred dollars. Papa was so kind."

"And was it bought for charity?" asked the Cold Night.

"Why, no," answered Kitty, in surprise. "For me, of course."

"But the ball is for charity?"

Kitty began to be bewildered by so much catechising, and she was much relieved when he led her away.

They descended to the grand entrance, where he pointed out two little beggars, a boy and a girl, who fiddled and sang, and asked a penny of the rich people descending from the carriages.

"You passed them by to-night."

"Yes," said Kitty, "but they are horrid beggars."

The Cold Night was silent, and Kitty was afraid she might have said something wrong, so she added: "And common street fiddlers."

But the Cold Night said nothing.

They both watched the little duo—Tosey and Tibby, the Cold Night said—and drew nearer to hear what they would say. People, rich with money and great in charity, carefully passed them by, for they were ragged beggars, and fiddled and sang. It was cold, very cold; and Tosey played very, very slowly, while the breath of Tibby's quivering plaint disappeared despairingly in the frosty air. The wheels of carriages seemed to creak in sympathy, as they crushed down the snow. Yes, it was cold indeed, yet they fiddled and sang untiringly, while the rich people alighted and passed up the grand entrance, after glancing contemptuously at the poor little duo, who fiddled and sang as the brilliant dresses disappeared in the distant doorway; but finally stopped as the last carriage drove away.

"I suppose we looks too awful," said Tosey, wetting his lips and feeling vacantly in the small pocket, which God knows, had not seen so much as a dime for many and many a day.

"Yes," said Tibby, "but I does feel so hungry, an I sang so loud, and I tried so hard, and——"

Tibby slightly sobbed and silently used a small piece of her shawl to wipe away a large tear.

"Don't cry," said Tosey, tremulously; "let's move on, and perhaps we'll find a little somethin'. Oh, if we only had a few pennies!"

Tosey took Tibby's hand and they started to move away.

"Oh, Mr. Cold Night," exclaimed Kitty, sorrowfully, "let me give them something—poor little things!"

"But they are beggars," answered the Cold Night.

Kitty looked ashamed. She could feel herself blush, even though she was cold and shivering. The Cold Night handed her a silver-piece.

"Yes," said he, "drop it, even if it's wasted. See what they will do."

Kitty took it quickly and dropped it before them. Right at Tibby's foot fell the money, which she would have passed unnoticed if Tosey had not exclaimed:

"Oh, Tibby, there's a dime!" and picked it up.

Tibby clasped her hands in delight, danced up and down and then looked into his hand, to be sure that it was really there. It was, surely.

"Won't we have a hot potato, though!" said Tosey.

"And a big roll, and some butter and some meat, and just a very little piece of pie?"

Tibby named each one of them on the ends of her fingers, but stopped when she got to her thumb, for the money was all gone by that time, and the thumb was quite large.

"But how did it come there?" asked Tosey.

"Could it have growed?" suggested Tibby.

"No," said Tosey.

"Or fell from the sky?"

"Guess not," said Tosey, dubiously.

"Or been flunged?"

"Oh, no; of course not!" Tosey answered, emphatically.

They looked hungrily at the piece of money, and began to count together what lots of things they could buy, and their faces grew bright indeed as they thought of it.

From the shade of the opposite side of the entrance, a thin bundle of rags slowly crept, and stealthily shuffled up to them. Out of the dirt and rags peered a thin face and glistening eyes, and the hands of the small bundle wearily rubbed themselves together, to try and stir up the blood that was not there.

"This is a charity ball," said the thin bundle.

"These folks dances for the poor." The glistening eyes looked eagerly at Tosey and Tibby, and frequently glanced at the money in their hands. "We is poor, and they dances for us, me and mother, who is sick abed; they dances to give us the bread which we seldom has."

Tosey looked in surprise at the thin bundle rubbing its hands.

"And does they dress in nice closes for us, and ride in carriages, and give lots of money, and all for us?"

The thin bundle rubbed faster and faster.

"Yes, if there's any more than as pays for the dancin' and the dressin'; and the dancin' costs ten dollars apiece, and the dressin'—oh, I dunno! It's all for us —if there's any left."

"But they didn't give us any when I sang," said Tibby.

"Lors, no!" said the thin bundle; "they thinks beggars don't need nothin'. They has folks as hunts up poor folks when they has time, and sews flannels when they hasn't. Yes, they says they does all this for us, but"— The bundle shook its head as if it were doubtful, and continued:

"I stood over yender thinkin' somebody would give me somethin'; but they all looked mad at me, and I went back inter the shadder and watched 'em. It was a big sight, but I'm jest as hungry." The hands stopped rubbing, and the eyes looked wet, as the bundle added: "My mother is very, very sick. Oh, we's poor—so poor!"

Tosey looked at his little sister as the rags began to shuffle away.

"Tibby," says he, "does we feel so awful hungry?"

Tibby hesitated. She looked at the silver, and then at the slowly retreating figure, and then she looked up into Tosey's gentle, loving face.

"No, Tosey; I dunno as I does."

Tosey turned around, and, running after the departing figure, handed her the piece of money.

"There," says he, "take it; you need it more than we does."

The bundle looked in surprise as she took the piece

and tears fell down the thin, pale face. But she only said: "I'm very, very grateful," and walked off.

The two little musicians watched the figure as it disappeared in the darkness, while the happy shuffle grew fainter and fainter.

Ah, here was charity, Godlike charity, in the hearts of the beings whom the rich despised and thrust from their doors!

As the Cold Night turned toward Kitty, he found her silently wiping her eyes.

"Do you see what true charity is?" asked he, in a sweet, sympathetic voice.

"Yes, yes," murmured Kitty; "I see, I see."

While they were talking, they had slowly risen up, up to the brilliant windows again.

"Now look at the mockery," said the Cold Night, somewhat harshly.

It was the most brilliant hour of the ball. Lights from myriads of jets, embedded in massive chandeliers, sparkle with dazzling intensity, making the brightest day of gloomy night. People decked with jewels and silks and laces were gathered in merry groups, or joining in pleasurable dance to the strains of sweet and lively music. It was a beautiful sight indeed; but somehow the people looked heartless to Kitty, and the jewels glittered spitefully, while the rich silks seemed to hiss and hiss as they rustled along, as if all were rebelling against their false use.

"But one more act," said the Cold Night, gently leading her down, down to the opposite side of the street.

From a dark corner, with their arms twined about each other's necks, the two little beggars watched the windows of the brilliantly lighted hall—away up in the sky it seemed—watched the gay figures that frequently appeared in rich, dainty dresses, and smiled to think it was all for the poor and needy.

"They dances for us and for others," murmured Tibby; "for those as is in want. Maybe the beautiful ladies will find us here to-morrow, and give us some bread."

"Yes," said Tosey; "and the poor little girl as has

the sick mother. P'raps they'll find them and help them, too."

The Cold Night waved his hand above them, and they both shivered, and said how cold it was. Tosey tried to play a note on his violin, but the strings creaked so dismally that he laid it aside. Then they sang together the sweet little song of charity which Tibby had sung to the rich people; and, as they sang, the Cold Night spread his mantle slowly around them until they were fast asleep.

"Oh, sir!" cried Kitty, "spare them, and let them live."

"No," said the Cold Night, "they are too poor to live. They must die."

Kitty fell on her knees before him.

"Oh, sir!" she pleaded, beseechingly, "I am rich, and will take care of them, and relieve them from suffering."

But the Cold Night raised its hand and pointed upward, saying:

"Too late, too late!"

As he spoke, he took the beggars in his arms and slowly rose up toward the stars, leaving Kitty sobbing on the ground. As she knelt there, she heard, high in the skies, the song that the beggars sang, the song of sweet charity, swelling to a mighty chorus, as one would think to celebrate a mighty deed—mighty in the sight of heaven. She tried to raise her head, but could not; she seemed bound to the earth by a great weight, as of gold, while above the song grew fainter and fainter, till at last it ceased, and then she fell into a deep swoon.

It was broad daylight when Kitty awoke, and the sun was shining brightly into her window. In the hall the maid was humming a subdued song as she went blithely about her work; while without, the white smoke of morning fires—signs of stirring life—curled upward from the chimney-tops into the cool air as if glad to meet the light of day.

"It was only a dream; yet, oh, how vivid!" thought Kitty, as she rubbed her eyes again and again, surprised

to see the walls of her own pretty room actually around her.

"Only a dream, only a dream; yet, how full of truth!" cheerily rang the milkman's bell as Kitty donned her morning dress; while, as she passed down the broad staircase, the great hall clock seemed to say:

"Only a dream, only a dream; yet there's a lesson; yet there's a lesson"; and Kitty pondered.

A year from that time Kitty passed by the same old clock; but this time it said, as it ticked, ticked away:

"Only a dream; yet it has made her an angel—an angel of mercy to suffering need. Her name, so dear to us, is a name of love among the poor. Ah, happy, happy was the day when, to her eyes, a dream revealed true charity."

It is hoped that no young person will be encouraged by the luck of "Lady," to undertake a similar enterprise. Such a combination of circumstances is harder to find and more difficult to master than the most complicated modern time-lock. But Martha McCulloch Williams, when she wrote this pretty story for ROMANCE, had doubtless in mind the cheer which all these delightful incidents will afford to those who read them at this Christmas season, when so many are feeling the stress of "hard times."

LADY'S CHRISTMAS STORY.

SHE walked up to the editor's desk with something of a child's bewilderment in her liquid eyes. Outside grime and fog overspread the city, but the streets were full of the jocund noise, the rush and struggle of before-Christmas traffic. The holiday, in fact, was but three days off; the editor had just sent down the very last proofs of the articles which were to make up his Christmas edition.

He was a youngish man, with a bulging forehead, combative jaw, and eyes which saw everything. As Lady came toward him, he said mentally, "H-m—she's new to offices. I'll warrant never saw an editor before, —country-bred too,—hers is not the step of the *pave*,— and southern, I judge, from her absurdly small feet." Aloud he said, motioning toward the chair at his right, "Will you not sit down and let me know what I can do for you?"

Lady's breath came hard. A quick color played in her cheek. Her ill-gloved hands clasped themselves nervously over something which they held. Taking firm hold of her waning courage, she said, with a half-gasp, "I came to—to bring you a Christmas story. Won't you read it please—if you are not busy—and—and—if you can—give me the money for it—right away?"

"The innocent! the preposterous innocent!" Mr Vantage said to himself with an inward thrill of amusement. But the girl's voice was so ravishing—so soft,

so clear, so full of flute-suggestions, despite its tremor, that listening was a pure delight. He would make her speak again. Glancing at the card which lay on his desk, he said tentatively,

"Well, you see, Miss Carroll, we are rather full-handed on Christmas stuff. May I ask if—if there is any special reason why you wish to dispose of what you have brought?"

"Would I be here—otherwise?" Lady said sitting up very straight. Vantage smiled a little and half held out his hand saying,

"Have you much experience in writing this sort of thing?"

"I—I never wrote anything but letters in all my life," Lady said, biting her lips to control their tremor.

As she laid her packet of scribbled sheets upon the desk, a voice at his elbow said, "Read it, Vantage. You will just have time before we go out for dinner."

Looking shyly across, she saw another man of whom she had been unconscious. He was lounging in a big office-chair, idly turning over the leaves of a Christmas book. As Vantage turned to him, a quick look passed betwixt them. Then when the editor plunged into the manuscript, the other came around and laid a pile of holiday literature at Lady's elbow, saying,

"Perhaps these may amuse you, while you wait."

Vantage's eyebrows went up perceptibly. Never before had "the chief," Fane Richmond, Esq., the bachelor owner of three-fourths of the paper's stock and several millions beside, been known to take notice of a woman-caller. Indeed, he was everywhere set down as a woman-hater, who kept out of society with malice aforethought, and had just three enthusiasms in life—his horses, his library, and the editor of his newspaper.

When the two lads were at college, Richmond had saved Vantage from himself—had kept him from flinging to the winds his time, his talent, and a moderate inheritance. In consequence, he felt himself deeply bound to his salvage. He was tall and slight, with a thinnish face and deep, dreamy eyes,—altogether so unlike the person who would seem likely to influence

Vantage, that Lady wondered not a little over that gentleman's complaisance.

Though she tried faithfully to wrap her consciousness in the gorgeous Santa Clauses, the fairies, the exaggerated roses and lilies and babes of Bethlehem, that sprawled in red and gold over cards and booklets, she saw, in spite of all, the reader's face, as he skimmed page after page, smiling a little here and there, and positively chuckling outright, albeit the story dealt with the entirely serious return of a repentant runaway heiress, with the usual complement of small children, her forgiveness and reinstatement in the paternal hall.

Of course, it was very bad, "Bad enough to be pure fun," Vantage told himself, laying down the sheets. He had the name of being pitiless in such cases. In the face of those hopeful eyes, he dropped his own, saying,

"Will you wait a little longer? I'll see what space we have left."

"Do," said Mr. Richmond approvingly; then, as Vantage went through the door, "I am sure there is room, Miss Carroll,—one can't have too many good things for Christmas."

"But—but—this is not good—this story of mine,—only the best I could do—and that I know is—is bad. Give it to me—and let me go away. I don't see how I ever dared to come," Lady said, standing up with clasped hands, a very moral of distress.

"No doubt you came for—a very good reason—won't you tell me what it is?" Mr. Richmond asked, putting her gently back in her chair and himself taking Vantage's place.

"I will try—but—but it's a long story—else I cannot make you understand," the girl said, leaning a little toward him, her face full of trouble. "You see I live in the south—Carolina—we are very poor—everybody there is—everybody that is of our sort who had nothing but land and slaves. Last summer a lady my mother knew years ago came to stay with us a while. She said my voice was wonderful—a fortune if I cultivated it—and offered to give me a three-years' course here in

New York—to be paid for when I am earning money. Of course, I was glad to come—gladder when three weeks ago some one wanted me to sing in concert—and said I was to have twenty-five dollars for it,—and Mrs. Wilton, who brought me here, said I might do as I pleased with the money. That made me very happy—I wrote to mother asking if I should send her the money, or what it would buy. Here is her answer. See, she says, 'Send the money dear child—well as I would love to have Christmas gifts of your earning. Sallie, your good nurse, is down with rheumatism. I have been casting about on all sides for a way to get her medicines and flannels. When I read her your letter, she smiled in spite of her pain, saying, "Bless de Lord, my chile ain't forget her home-folks! Tell her I prays fer her ebery night."'

"On top of that," Lady choked for a minute, "I caught cold—the doctor said it might ruin my voice to sing,—and—and Mrs. Wilton utterly forbade it. I could not disobey her as matters stood, but oh, my heart was fit to break. Then the thought came to me to write something, and bring to your paper——"

"Why did you choose it from all the others?" Mr. Richmond asked as the narrator made a long pause. Vantage had come in noiselessly and stood listening unperceived. Lady said, her cheeks painfully hot,

"I—I—hardly like to tell you—you have been so kind about it—but it was this way. I knew your paper was one of the first, the bitterest, in the Abolition fight. In my despair,—it was nothing less,—it seemed easy to come and say to you—indeed to demand—'Buy what I offer that I may have money to relieve the suffering you helped to create.' Poor Sally is the last slave born on our plantation. If—if—things were as they used to be, she would have grown up hale and strong, with warm clothes, good food, and somebody to take care of her. She is the youngest of ten—with so many mouths, some must go hungry. Of course, mother did all she could for them,—but when the land is poor—and then droughts every other year,—you have—oh so little for anybody! Sally at twenty-five looks older than her

mother—she loves me—she carried me in her arms when she was a little bit of a girl. I love her dearly,—that is why I came. It did not seem wrong,—but—but—I think I had better have stayed away."

"Indeed! Why?" asked Mr. Richmond.

"Because—because it is no better than begging," Lady said, tears springing again to her eyes. "Though—really—there was no other way to help Sally——"

"Are there no poor-houses in Carolina?" Vantage asked coming forward. Lady got up with flashing eyes, and said steadily,

"Yes—but do you think we would let one of our own people go there while we had a roof and a crust? Please give me back my manuscript, sir, and let me go. I see that—that my coming was—altogether a mistake."

"I can't—it's—it's in the composing-room," Vantage said mendaciously obedient to the telegraphing from Mr. Richmond's eyes.

"Then—then—keep it—I know it is—worthless," Lady said, turning to go. Mr. Richmond stepped before her, saying gravely,

"You are mistaken, Miss Carroll—your Christmas story is worth a great deal. Wait a moment—you shall have a check."

"Yes—it's quite the best one we've got," Vantage said heartily, comprehending that "the chief" meant the spoken story, not the written one.

Lady's face shone, though doubt lingered in her eyes.

"Do you truly think so? Then the rest must be very bad," she said hesitatingly. "If—if it is really worth anything, I shall be the happiest girl in New York."

"It is worth a great deal more than we can pay for it," Richmond said, smiling behind his mustache. "Newspapers, you know, Miss Carroll, have to drive hard bargains with individuals, so as to be public benefactors. Vantage, please make out a check for fifty dollars."

"Not to me!" Lady said, catching her breath. "You—you must send it to Sally herself—else how will you know that—that I am not an impostor? O! I wish she had it—this very minute!"

"Where does Sally live?" asked Vantage—then when Lady had named the Carolina town nearest the plantation. "We can telegraph it there to-night—if you know any one who would forward it."

Lady did know some one. As in a dream she gave the name, saw messages written out, messengers dispatched, a little later found herself put safe into a cab and driving homeward through dusk streets flaming momently thicker with big blurred globes of white and yellow light. More than once she pinched her arm, laughing a little delighted laugh, and said aloud, "Lady Carroll, are you certain sure that you are—you?"

Mr. Richmond and Mr. Vantage went away to dinner, each oppressed with a weight of preoccupied silence, though they spoke casually of things by the way. All the night through, it was the same. For some inscrutable reason they both chose to stay in the office until three o'clock,—something which Mr. Richmond, at least, had not done for a year. And though they sat elbow to elbow, a veil hung betwixt them. No word was spoken of their visitor until they sat quite alone, save for the sleepy boy, nodding in the outer office.

Vantage said, puffing a furious blue cloud, and gazing up into its rings, "Really—that was a bit out of comic opera. The idea of coming at us with that story, because of our politics! Oddest part was—while she was talking, I really felt that she was exactly right about it. Do you know, though, I think that girl would starve sooner than do for herself what she did for her nurse?"

"Sure of it," said Richmond laconically. "Sure, too, she would rather have put her hand in the fire than come on here on such an errand as she did. Of course, you'll print what she brought?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"For one thing, no room. For another, want of time. For a third,—it's atrocious, though I must do her the justice to say that there is a pleasing paucity of demonstration in it,—kisses and such matters are all left to the imagination."

"I thought she could not be underbred—even on

paper. But see here, my good fellow—I can't and won't have her feelings hurt with the thought that we deceived her,—that her stuff was not really printable. It must go—if it swamps the editorial page."

"Well, well! I'll manage it somehow," Vantage said, throwing away his cigar. "But say, Chief, I thought you dreaded the rustle of a petticoat worse than the roar of cannon. You must be growing case-hardened. No doubt we shall have you figuring at teas and things before the season is over."

Mr. Richmond looked at Vantage and smiled. "There is magic abroad, I think," he said. "There must be—how else should Mr. Vantage, the most mercilessly conscientious of editors, have so paltered with the truth as to discuss what was on its face a hopeless case?"

"Give it up!" Vantage said laughing. "Lucky for me you were here, Chief. I can't explain it at all. I only know that I could no more have talked to that girl as I might to one who came conscious and smirking than I could strike a baby who laughed and held out its arms to me. Alone I must have done—exactly what *we* did."

"I certainly hope so," said Mr. Richmond, slowly drawing on his overcoat; then, as they stood waiting for the elevator to come up, "Life, I trust, holds many golden moments for that girl—but not one of them, I am sure, can ever bring her more joy than her heart held to-night."

Vantage looked curiously at him, and said in a repressed voice, "Still, I think you had rather the best of it."

* * * * * * *

Aunt Mandy Carroll's cabin was rather picturesque in summer. It stood on the edge of a big old field, had a background of forest, and a wreathy mat of gourd-vine and wistaria over the arbor in front of the one door. But in December it was comfortless enough,—with the wind whistling like mad through the crannied walls, low clouds scudding swift overhead, and fine, needle-sharp rain searching out the leaks in the roof and the cracks about the one window.

Two beds, a trunk, various old-fashioned chests, a table, three chairs and a rusty tin safe made up its furnishing,—not to mention the pot, pan and skillet which stood on the big hearth, back of which a log fire smouldered and flamed up the wide chimney throat. Sally in the bed nearest it stretched out her swollen hands toward the blaze, and said rather slowly, "Mammy, does you reckon mistis will come ter see me tuday? It's a-rainin right down."

"God knows, chile,—I don't," the mother said, her thick lips trembling a little. "Pear ter me like Sallie you's better dis mornin. Ef I bake ye a little hoe-cake an' fry ye some meat, don't ye feel ye kin eat a little?"

Sallie shook her head. "I ain't got so much misery in my j'ints," she said, "but I'se weak as er kitten,—don't seem like I kin swaller corn bread. I'll wait. Ef mistis comes, she's sho ter fetch me er biscuit."

Mandy's lip trembled more violently. "Honey, mistis cooked de las flour in her barrel fer you yistiddy," she said, swallowing hard, "but—but she told me ne'er min',—de Lord would previde;—an when she say it she sorter smile—so maybe she got er idee how He gwine do it."

A deliberate knock at the door announced the doctor,—a patient, grizzled, over-worked gentleman, who, after examining Sally, said to her mother, "Well, Mandy, I've done my share. All Sally needs now is something to eat and to wear. Smother her in flannel,—red flannel, mind you, and make her eat six times a day."

"Yes, sir," said Mandy, curtsying him away. To his back she said almost fiercely, "Eat and wear! Whar is it ter come from! Ef dat whut cyore sick folks, Doctor Geeble, whyn't you tote it in yo saddle-bags?"

As she turned to close the door, she spied a buggy coming slowly along the miry country road which ran a little way off. A sight so unusual chained her to the spot. When a minute later the buggy halted at her door, she darted out exclaiming, "Howdy, mistis, howdy! Sally's better,—an' des er pinin' fer de sight er you."

"That is good news," said Mrs. Carroll. "Mandy,

you have not forgotten Brother Green. He is the minister who stayed with us in the storm last summer. He has driven out from town this morning, on purpose to do us a kindness."

"I 'members Brudder Green. Sarvent, suh," said Mandy, hurrying her visitors in out of the rain. Mrs. Carroll went up to the bed and laid something in Sally's weak fingers, saying, "Lady sent you this, Sally, with her love, for Christmas. Now I hope you will hurry and get well."

Mandy fell on her knees at the bedside, crying out as she kissed some crisp bank-notes. "Money! Bless God! Bless de Lord! Bless de sweet chile dat sent it, dat ain't fergot her black mammy, an' her Sally whar rocked her cradle so many many times. De good Lawd put it in her heart—I know he did—an' me jes been 'cusin' him ob lettin' my chile die!"

Sally was sobbing weakly in her joy. Mrs. Carroll turned her head away; the minister's eyes were misty; he raised his hands and said softly,

"'Ye are of more value than many sparrows.' My sisters, let us pray."

* * * * * * *

The next Christmas but one there was a fine turmoil all about the Carroll homestead,—which had somehow taken on an unwonted air of prosperity. Wreaths of holly and pine overarched the doors; log fires went roaring up all the big chimneys; the windows shone; the brasses on the old-fashioned furniture were resplendent as the sun;—in the dining-room a spotless table was tricked out with whatever of silver and china and glass the mansion still afforded.

In the kitchen, Mandy was roasting, before the fire, a sucking pig, and a very alderman of turkeys, muttering to herself as she turned them slowly around, "De chile always loved vittles cooked dis erway. Dun' spec' she's had nothin' fit ter eat sense she went erway."

Besides these, there were frosted pound-cakes, cheese-cake, transparent pudding, potato-pone, heavens knows how many other good things, all ready and waiting to be eaten.

Mrs. Carroll walked from room to room in a new black gown, with gold-rimmed spectacles pushed above her brow. Mandy, spick and span in plaid linsey and a white ruffled apron, looked alternately from her mistress to her daughter with equal pride in each.

For Sally was straight and strong now, the very moral of a neat-handed Phyllis. Like her mistress, she wore black, but her white apron outdid her mother's, for while Mandy was content with ruffles, Sally was further bedizened with wide crocheted insertion.

Presently there was the clang of a gate, the roll of wheels on the drive, the opening of a door, and Lady flung herself ecstatically into her mother's arms,—while Mandy rushed at the tall man who stood smiling over the scene, crying as she wrung the hand he held out, "Fore de Lawd, Marse Richmon', you mus'n't nebber take our chile crost dat big water no mo'!"

"We will all go together next time," said the gentleman. "She has talked of 'coming home' every day of our absence."

Lady—Mrs. Fane Richmond now—touched her husband's arm, saying, "Fane—here is Sally—my Sally whom you saved once,—your first and best Christmas gift to me."

"And Sally gave you to me," Mr. Richmond said with a beaming smile. "I think, sweetheart, the transaction leaves me always and deeply in her debt."

A young man so bright as the hero of the following story certainly deserved the fair bride whom he won. His methods were not above criticism, it is true, but as the author, Jean Destrem, sagely remarks, if he had not secured his prize by one method, he surely would have done it by another. E. S. A. L. translated the tale for ROMANCE.

A STUDY IN SMOKE.

I.

IN the highest part of a large and imposing building, situated on the street Chaussée-d'Antin, a young man by the name of Passeraud perched like a sparrow on the topmost branch of a poplar tree. The manners of this young man were peaceful and orderly; his temper was gentle; his bearing, modest; his clothes were patched. The janitor had expressly forbidden this insignificant tenant to have in his possession a dog, a violin, a sewing-machine, anything, no matter what, which was cumbersome or noisy. He was enjoined to come in very early at night. It was a question in the neighborhood how he managed to keep his hands clean, for the janitor had forbidden him to take up any water, because this liquid, carried carelessly in jugs by his youthful hands, might damp the stairs. However, by good will and good humor, Passeraud had succeeded in making his presence supportable, although only a poor devil in a house inhabited by bankers, favorite tenors, diplomates and commissioners of accounts.

He had recently left the Ecole Centrale with an honorable standing, and almost immediately the Calcium Mining Company of the Upper Peloponnesus had offered him a position—one hundred dollars a month to begin with—which would have put him out of the reach of want; but as he dreamed of inventing an automatic brake, which would prevent locomotives from coming into collision on the railroad, or at least would reduce the force of the shock, he had refused the offers of the mining company, to give himself night and day to the

drawing of innumerable diagrams of the brake in question. Therefore, he looked forward to glory and fortune, but while he waited, he was dying of hunger. That mattered not to him; his invention—he was absolutely sure of that—his invention was on the point of succeeding.

One day, on the first flight of the staircase, he encountered a young girl, blonde and exquisitely dressed and so graceful that a scholar would immediately have called her a goddess—as shown by her bearing. She went forward and disappeared, light and supple, leaving behind her a subtile odor of lemon verbena, and Passeraud, astonished, remained motionless in the middle of the landing for five minutes with his mouth open, as though he expected that the vision of his peerless neighbor would present itself to him anew.

The next day, by a coincidence which we would like to believe quite fortuitous, Passeraud was on the same landing exactly at the same hour again. The young girl passed, and, as it seemed, blushed in passing. Fearing that he had wounded her, Passeraud resolved never to come down the staircase at that hour again.

The following day, however, he remembered that urgent business compelled him to go out at a moment exactly identical with that when leaving the house was quite forbidden him by his decision of the day before. He took up his hat, annoyed at this business which exposed him to the danger of embarrassing with his presence a person whom he would not have troubled for the world. What he dreaded, happened; a new meeting took place, and Passeraud was inconsolable, the fair maid having blushed more than before.

He was accordingly enraged against himself; the unknown one, scandalized at being thus followed, would very probably take steps to keep herself out of his way. In order to convince himself of this misfortune, Passeraud sought the same place every day at the same hour, and every day drew aside on the staircase to let his neighbor pass. Brought up politely by his mother, he bowed at each meeting. At the end of some time, it seemed to him that the slight inclination of the head

which he received in return took on an aspect almost friendly.

Having noticed this, he went to look at himself in the mirror of a shop—in his room there was nothing of the sort—in order to know if his person was such that it might please so accomplished a young girl. Then he saw that, even though the cut of his overcoat was bad, there was nothing repulsive about his looks. Next he inquired, with caution, concerning the first name of the pretty young lady of the first floor. He did not know why, but he had a strong desire to know her first name. When he had learned that it was Valentine, he was quite enchanted.

These comings and goings were not of advantage to the automatic brake; the diagrams were neglected.

At last Passeraud took a decided step; he dressed himself as well as possible, went down to the apartments of Valentine's father, who was no less a personage than M. Lamantin, owner of the large and imposing building, and said to him: "Sir, I have the honor to ask for your daughter's hand."

"My daughter's hand!" said the astonished old gentleman, eyeing Passeraud from head to foot. "For whom, if you please?"

"For myself, sir."

"For yourself! Why, are you not my little tenant of the garret, up there under the roof?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then what do you mean? My daughter has eight hundred thousand dollars. I am willing to inform you of that fact. Do you take it in? Eight hundred thousand. And you, what have you?"

The engineer answered frankly; then he added:

"I am not actually rich, but if you give me Mlle. Valentine, believe that my work, my humble acquirements——"

"Stop talking! your conversation is of no interest to me. Will you please to take your departure at once! It makes me die of laughing to have you come to ask me for my daughter. I have only to add, 'Good evening.'"

"But, sir, if I do not present my suit until after my automatic brake has made me a millionaire, I risk finding Mlle. Valentine married to another. Now, sir, I do not wish to run any such risk."

"So much the worse. What do you want me to do about it?"

Passeraud retired in much distress. Banging the doors after him, M. Lamantin exclaimed:

"Not a cent! No position! Asks for my daughter. Ah! really, it is quite interesting."

II.

This visit, which had such an unfavorable result as regards our friend, left very slight traces on the mind of M. Lamantin. What brought, several days later, an anxious look to the latter's face was simply the fact that his parlor chimney smoked.

In the middle of the month of December and just as he was preparing to arrange a reception in honor of his daughter's nineteenth birthday, his parlor chimney began to smoke. A householder could scarcely have had a more disagreeable thing happen to him. M. Lamantin sent for his architect, who hastened to come, smelling an order.

"Is that all?" he said, vexed when he learned what the matter was.

"I think that is quite enough. It is not amusing to own a chimney that makes my wife and myself weep all day long, like a family recently afflicted."

"Your chimney was built on my plans. That means it does not smoke."

"But it does smoke."

"Because you burn Mons coal; don't burn Mons. Burn wood, and you will have a clear fire."

"Perhaps you are right."

The change to wood in place of coal did not make the chimney's breathing easier. M. Lamantin, who was a resolute man, sent for the best architect in Paris and begged him to deign to come in person to study the question.

The artist, after having minutely examined the chimney, did not scruple to restrain this cruel reflection on his brother in art: "What ass built this chimney?"

"It was Lédenté, my architect."

"It was well said; an ass. Have the flue made four inches higher, in order to increase the draught. It will be all right then."

"What a simple matter it is, after all."

"It only needed a little thought."

The operation completed, the chimney smoked as before. But the great architect took care of his bill.

"Hang it! what a bill!" M. Lamantin could not help sighing as he paid it.

Disgusted with architects, the householder turned to bricklayers. The first one called in ordered the addition to the flue of a piece of sheet-iron, in the form of a serpent.

The chimney continued to send out its smoke into the parlor.

A second bricklayer arrived; with disgust he had his colleague's serpent removed, and substituted for it a sort of helmet of the same material.

The chimney did not pay any attention to the helmet, but smoked, worse than ever.

But here the concierge interposed with these consoling words: "Sir, you are wrong to despair; I was just this moment talking of this matter with one of the tenants—oh! I must say it, such a nice tenant! He told me that he would undertake to disenchant your chimney in five minutes."

"Let him come to me instantly, or I give him notice to leave."

As quick as lightning, Passeraud put himself at the orders of M. Lamantin. He found his landlord tramping up and down his parlor, which was as cold as ice.

"Ah, it is you, young man, who flatter yourself you can cure in five minutes chimneys incurably ill. Try; I am curious to see you do it."

"Five minutes is a little too short a time, sir. I want an hour."

"Very well—an hour. Here is a chimney given up

by all the doctors. If you make it agree to send its smoke up into the skies instead of down into my apartments, I will give you what you wish. I am quite out of patience, I do not wish to bargain. Name your price."

"Sir," answered Passeraud with dignity, "you will give me—the hand of Mlle. Valentine. That is my price—to be paid only after I have succeeded."

"For a chimney! You wander in your talk, my dear sir."

"*This* chimney, sir? Send for M. Garnier, the architect of the opera; add to him a picked jury of engineers, chemists, members of the Institute, professors from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, and if these gentlemen can do in three months what I undertake to do in an hour, that is to say, prevent it from smoking—as also to prevent from smoking all chimneys with the same trouble, I agree that you should treat me as though I were indeed raving."

"The hand of my daughter! That is a high price. However, if really you do possess such a secret, you will be able to make money, a great deal of money, and——"

"I have a secret, in reality; and, as I have a high opinion of it, you will give me authority to shut myself alone in this parlor for an hour and you will give me your word not to look through the keyhole. I only go to work on that condition "

"As you please. But why have you not simply taken out a patent? You would avoid these childish precautions."

"I am not rich enough to pay the first premium on a patent."

"Borrow the money. This is a case for borrowing, if ever there was one."

"Sir, I hate borrowing."

"Well, I am going. Perform your mysterious operations in peace and tranquillity."

"You will not look through the keyhole?"

"I give you my most solemn promise."

"And—I have your word—if I succeed?"

"We will see. I do not want to yield on compulsion, but I am a just man."

Once alone, Passeraud wasted the time in foolish proceedings rather out of place, the gravity of the circumstances considered. An attentive spectator—but Passeraud had banished spectators—would have heard him hum the air:

"C'est ici que Rose respire!"

The same surprised spectator would have seen him go from one piece of furniture to another with a delighted air, walking as in a dream among the beautiful furniture, extend himself at full length upon the sofa —here Valentine must have sat! then install himself in a small chair,—this low seat is without doubt the one she prefers!—then gaze for a long while at a young girl's portrait—that is her dear picture!—and throw kisses to it—to you, ever to you!—These frivolous proceedings having consumed the appointed sixty minutes, Passeraud opened the doors and called everyone.

"Have a fire made, sir."

Passeraud was obeyed. The chimney had now a clear strong draught. A gentle warmth breathed through the chilled and frosty room. There was not the least smoke. Passeraud's genius shone out like the sun; he who could not see it was blind.

"It is too delightful!" exclaimed M. Lamantin radiantly. "Valentine, this dear young man is a great engineer. He shall be my son-in-law with your consent."

"Oh! yes, papa."

III.

A year after these miraculous events, Mme. Passeraud,—née Lamantin—had a son as beautiful as the morning. Upon this occasion M. Lamantin made the following speech:

"My dear son, explain one thing to me; three months ago the railroad companies adopted your automatic brake; gold showers upon you from all sides; the right to use your patent is purchased in England, America, Italy, Australia, the Indies, and Spain. You are now

rich, not from your wife's dowry, but of yourself. Does not that make you think seriously? But to come to what is troubling me; you have on hand another invention, and you do nothing with it."

"To what invention do you allude, sir?"

"Why, what else could it be but your secret for preventing chimneys from smoking. Ah! you are not going to tell me now that you are too poor to pay the premium?"

"Pshaw! that would not bring in much."

"It would be a spoke in the wheel; why neglect a profit ready to your hand?"

"Father, do not let us talk about it."

"Yes, yes, I wish to."

"Father, you will oblige me to tell you things I would rather keep to myself."

"Speak out, speak out."

"Well then, know that I did not cure your chimney of smoking, simply stopped making it smoke. There is a shade of difference between these two things. My room then was up under the roof. I had only to put out my hand to check the draught, by placing something, no matter what, over the flue—a plate, for example. It was your fault, too; ever since the world was made, cruel fathers have forced lovers to carry off their daughters by stratagem. I did as everyone does; I improvised a little comedy. My excuse is, that Valentine helped me; it was she who commissioned the concierge to represent me as the greatest chimney-builder of the vicinity. Forgive us both, and console yourself by thinking that it is fate which so rules, for those who love each other must succeed in their plans; that is a law. When a prudent marriage is happy, it is the exception which proves the rule. So then, my son, born this morning, is rich; be sure that he will fall madly in love with an honorable but poor girl. Only he will not have the pleasure of playing a trick on me; I declare to you in advance that I will give him this maiden without a cent, certain as I am that, if I did not give her to him—he would take her."

In the following story of "the plain people," Ella Higginson describes a Christmas in the new, far-off State of Washington.

'MANDY'S ORG'N.

"I WONDER," reflected Mrs. Bentley, "why 'Mandy don't feed them chick'ns—'ts high time they was fed! 'Man-dy! Hoo-oo-hoo! Hoo-oo-hoo! You 'Mandy!"

"Yes, maw, what d'you want?"

A girl about seventeen years old came out the kitchen door, and stood looking at her mother with her hands on her comely hips. Mrs. Bentley was twenty or more steps away, and the chickens were making so much noise she had to raise her voice to a disagreeable, rasping pitch. "What'd' I want! Why, I want ter know why you don't feed them chick'ns, missy—that's what I want! Step around lively, now, 'n' don' forget 's Chris'mas Eve, 'n' a lot o' extry work ter be done. You ac' 's if you didn't care whether the minister hed anything fer dinner to-morrow 'r not!"

"I don't care," said the girl, with sullen emphasis. She came out into the lane, and stood near her mother. Her apron, gathered up in her left hand, was full of wheat. With her right hand, she began scattering it on the hard, ungrassed ground.

"Mebbe you think 'ts fun ter hev ministers 'n' their wives 'n' a lot o' childern ter cook 'n' work fer an Chris'mas," she said; "but I don't. I wish Chris'mas 'ud never come—fer all the good it does us! Maria Quackenbush's paw 's got her a new org'n," she added, suddenly. A glow of eagerness came across her face, but faded almost instantly.

"Has he?" said Mrs. Bentley, stolidly watching the chickens.

"'N 'ts got twenty-four stops, maw."

"What has?"

"The org'n Maria's paw got 'er fer Chris'mas."

The elder woman shut her lips together with a kind of grimness.

"I guess it won't give no better music than one with twenty-two," she said.

"No," said 'Mandy, with a sigh of indifference. "Oh, maw," she added, suddenly with a very passion of longing in her tone; "d' you think paw'll ever get me 'n org'n fer Chris'mas?"

"I do' know," replied her mother. "Looks kind o' like snow, don't it? Which o' them pull'ts 'r' you go'n' ter kill fer ter-morrow?"

"I do' know; any of 'em's fat enough."

A dull grayness lowered upon the farm. The wind whistled a little as it came around the corner of the big barn, and pushed some stray locks of the girl's hair across her neck. A horse came running up from the lower pasture, and looked over the tall bars, neighing and pawing the ground impatiently. Far off, down near the river, was the tinkle-inkle-inkle of a cow-bell.

"There comes the cows," said Mrs. Bentley, sighing unconsciously. It was a sigh of resignation, however, for Mrs. Bentley had been a farmer's daughter before she was a farmer's wife. "There!" she exclaimed, in mild triumph, as a cock crew; "Didn't I tell you it was go'n' ter storm? You can tell it by the mournful sound o' thet rooster's voice. Oh, say, 'Mandy! Dick Underwood got home las' week from town ter spend Chris'mas 'n' New Year. I just heard it while you was out gether'n' punk'ns!"

"I knowed it yesterday," said the girl. She did not stir or lift her eyes, but a faint color came into her face and a pulse in her throat began to beat quickly.

Her mother gave her a keen, searching look.

"I guess he'll mos' likely be go'n' ter Maria's ter-morrow, a-see'n' her new org'n," she said, looking away.

"Yes, I guess," said the girl. After a moment's hesitation, she added: "Maria's maw got 'er 'n offul pretty new dress."

"Did she?"—with a look of interest. "What's it like?"

"'T's a sort o' brown 'n' gold stripe—camel's hair. 'T's offul pretty," added the girl with a kind of bitter reluctance.

Mrs. Bentley was awed into silence for a moment in contemplation of Maria's splendor; then she gave a little sniff of contempt.

"Well, I don't see where them Quackenbush's git so much money ter spend on foolishness! They got just the same fer their pertatos 's we did—'n' they didn't have no bigger crop, I know. 'N' they ain't sold their hawgs yet. It beats me where they git their money ter pay fer things!"

"She's got a pair o' gloves ter match, too."

"Lan' sakes! Just 's if that pair o' gray ones she got 'n the spring wasn't good enough! It beats me. Well, there's one thing mighty sure! They needn't any of 'em think she's go'n' ter look better 'n all her finery than you'll look 'n thet peacock blue o' your'n!"

"'Ts 's old 's the hills," said the girl. Her lips quivered, and there was an undertone of tears in her voice. Her mother looked at her in mute sympathy.

"Maria Quackenbush ain't got no such figger 's your'n," she said, after a little, taking stock of the girl's good points; "nor no such hair, 'n' she don't know how ter do 't up like you do. I don't suppose he'll take a notion to her."

"Who will?" There was a conscious look on the girl's face.

"Dick Underwood."

"Who's a-car'n' whether he does 'r not?" exclaimed 'Mandy, with an exaggerated affectation of scorn and indifference that but poorly concealed the deep hurt her mother's words had given. "He's welcome to, 'f he wants to! Nobody 'll hender 'im, I guess."

"Hev you got them chick'ns fed?"

"Yes." She shook the last grains of wheat from her apron. Her face was flushed, and tears were very close to her eyes now.

As she turned toward the house, there was a clatter of unevenly galloping horses on the winter ground, and up to the gate dashed Maria Quackenbush and Dick Underwood, laughing noisily, and with a great deal of color in their faces, as if they had been riding recklessly.

"Whoa!" cried Maria, with spirit. "Whoa, I tell

you! Hello, 'Mandy! How do you do, Mis' Bentley! Guess my hair 's down my back, ain't it? My! I must be a sight! But when you git this horse warmed up, you can't go slow on him!"

"Won't you git down 'n' come in?" asked Mrs. Bentley, with cold and unmistakable disapproval. "How do you do, Mr. Underwood? My! how you have changed! 'Mandy!"

'Mandy came to the gate, blushing and looking rather shy and awkward. The young man jumped off his horse and shook hands with her through the gate.

"I've only changed in looks," he said, with shining eyes. "No, we can't come in to-night. We promised Mrs. Quackenbush we'd be back early to supper."

"We're go'n' ter hev some music 'n' sing'n'," said Maria loftily. "I've got a new org'n fer Chris'mas, 'Mandy."

"Yes, I heard," said 'Mandy, faintly.

"Got twenty-four stops 'n' two knee swells—a loud 'n' a soft. 'T's got a high back, 'n' places fer lamps 'n' vases. Can't you come over ter-night?"

"No, I guess not," said the girl. The color had left her face, and she was looking pale.

"No," said Mrs. Bentley, with a hard look in her eyes, "she'll hev ter do all the work ter-night. I'm a-go'n' ter town."

"Why, maw!" exclaimed 'Mandy, in amazement. "'R' you, honest? What you go'n' fur?"

"I'm a-go'n' ter git some things fer dinner ter-morrow. I'm all out."

She began drumming with her coarse red fingers on the gate. There was a look of sudden resolution—almost stubbornness—on her face; and a cold glitter, like steel, in her eyes,—especially when she looked at Maria.

"I wish you c'u'd come," said that young lady, airily, to 'Mandy, flicking her horse's ears with her whip; "I've got lots ter tell you"—simpering—"'n' just piles ter show you. I've got a new dress that'll make your mouth water!"

"Hunh!" sniffed Mrs. Bentley, tossing her head contemptuously.

"'Ts brown 'n' gold camel's hair—offul fine—'n' it cost a dollar-'n'-a-quarter a yard."

"Hez your paw sold his hawgs yet?" asked Mrs. Bentley, with sudden and startling significance. But evidently nothing could shake Maria's self-satisfaction to-day. She returned with placidity Mrs. Bentley's intense gaze.

"I do' know," she replied lightly. "'N' I've got a pair o' gloves ter match, 'Mandy. Guess you better come, after all. Well, we'll hev ter be go'n', Mr. Underwood"—she gave him a decidedly and boldly coquettish glance, whereat poor 'Mandy turned paler and Mrs. Bentley's face assumed a fairly purplish tinge—"'r we'll be late. Good-by! Hope you'll hev a good time ter-morrow."

"Good-night," said the young man, with a lingering look through the gate at the pale, pretty face and wide, hurt eyes. "I wish you a very happy Christmas!"

"Good-night," said 'Mandy, with a poor smile that was hardly a smile at all.

"Now, you go right 'n the house 'n' do up all the work, 'Mandy," said Mrs. Bentley, taking up a slop-pail and walking with quick, resolute strides. Every step seemed to say, "I've made up my mind! I've made up my mind!" "You tell Peter ter hitch Dock 'n' Charley ter the spring wag'n, while I'm dress'n'. 'N' you hurry up, too, so's I can git off before your paw gits back! I won't git home to-night; I'll put up at Mis' Huntly's. Hurry up!"

Too occupied with her own reflections to give more than a passing thought to her mother's sudden resolution, and eager to get her pale face away from those solicitous eyes, 'Mandy gladly obeyed.

Twenty minutes later Mrs. Bentley came from the house, dressed for town, and crossed the lane to the barn.

"I'll show them Quackenbush's 'f they can walk over my girl!" she was saying. Her lips were shut firmly together, and there was an ominous look in her eyes. "'Mandy's paw'll never git stirred up ter the pitch o' gitt'n 'n org'n; 'n' what's the sense o' my keep'n that

hunderd dollars ter bury myself with? Guess I'll git buried decent somehow. 'N' then a 'ticin' Dick Underwood down there on the strength o' a new org'n 'n' a new dress!" Her tone was bitter now indeed. "I'll show 'em!"

She climbed into the wagon over the front wheel, and took up the reins with decision.

"Git up," she said, in a tone not to be trifled with.

As she passed the kitchen, she looked in, but 'Mandy was not in sight. The ominous look deepened on the mother's face. "I'll show 'em," she muttered again. The wind whistled around the corner, and brought with it the first flurry of snow.

The ground was white when Mrs. Bentley drove with a flourish of triumph into the barn-yard. 'Mandy run out, bareheaded. She was still pale, and her eyes looked as if she had not slept.

"Oh, ma! she cried. "What you got there?"

"Stop holler'n'," said her mother grimly. "'Ts a new org'n fer you—'n' 'ts got twenty-eight stops 'n' three knee-swells!"

"Oh, maw!" exclaimed 'Mandy, completely overcome. Then—"you're a holler'n' yourself! Say, maw, what's the third swell fur?"

"I don't know what 'ts fur, but 'ts there. 'N' I guess I can holler 'f I want to, because I've showed 'em! 'N' I've got a dress fur you thet cost a dollar 'n' a half a yard, 'n' two pairs o' gloves ter match!"

"Oh, maw!" gasped 'Mandy, "you're a-holler'n' offul!"

"'N' Dick Underwood told me he was com'n' ter stay fer dinner, 'n' spend the evenin' ter see the new org'n. 'N' he asked me 'f I thought you liked him like you uster, 'n' like he likes you! So 'f I ain't showed them Quackenbushes, Missy, I'd like ter know who has! 'N' I guess I can holler 'f I want to!"

It is hard for an American to understand why Major Cornelius did not try to get a place in some office to eke out his pension. Even the exalted social position claimed by officers in the American army would not be compromised by this course, but it was evidently quite out of the question for the pathetic hero of our story. It appeared originally in the *Cornhill Magazine*. The author is unknown.

MAJOR CORNELIUS.

About thirty years ago I was clerk in a lawyer's office, on a very small income, and unmarried. I then lodged in Ebury Street, Belgravia, in a lodging and boarding house kept by an eminently respectable old maid, Miss Jones, who treated all her boarders with consideration and did not exact from them more than they were able to pay. We dined at her house only on Sundays and on Christmas Day—that is, unless invited out. The dinner was always early—at 1 o'clock—and always followed the same order. On the first Sunday in the month we had chicken and bacon; on the second, boiled beef, garnished with carrots and turnips (alternating with parsnips), and suet pudding; on the third Sunday we had roast mutton and fried potatoes; on the fourth, roast beef and mashed or boiled potatoes. When there were five Sundays in a month, the additional Sunday was supplied with beef-steak pudding, three pounds of beef to a pudding. I do not know how it was that the boiled potatoes at Miss Jones's always tasted of dish-clout. I know very well that potatoes are not boiled in a cloth; nevertheless the pudding, which is, did not taste of the clout, and the potatoes did. There are insoluble mysteries encountered in life—this was one.

Our landlady was tall, pale, sandy-haired. She lived *en déshabille* in the kitchen all the morning; but at 9 A. M. at breakfast, and at 4 P. M., when we boarders dropped in from our work, she was prim, laced, curled, and stately. How she managed to become so in a few minutes, I never knew. That also was one of the insoluble mysteries of life.

When one of us stayed at home indisposed, we found that by 9:30 A. M. she was what we called in our slang "dish-shovelled"; not a curl in place, a smirch across her cheek, and her neat merino gown replaced by a ragged dress not fit for a lady to wear. Miss Jones was the ideal maiden lady of propriety, dignity, and thrift. She was good-natured; on one point, however, she was inexorable—she never allowed her lodgers to fall into debt; we paid weekly, beforehand, one pound per head. She had an affable smile, and similar remarks on the weather for all her boarders. Each had a rasher of bacon of the same size at breakfast, and two lumps of sugar in his tea, and one spoonful of brown sugar in his coffee. Each, also, had an egg, and all the eggs tasted of lime-water or sawdust alike.

All the boarders were males except one, an old lady with a false front, who combed her back hair with an antimoniacal comb to blacken it; and this always made her collar grimy. She wore also a set of false teeth; both jaws were thus furnished—how contrived we never quite made out. That also remains one of the insoluble mysteries of life. They were somehow contrived to fit with springs, and were so badly contrived that in eating she did not look her best, and sometimes presented a very unattractive spectacle indeed. The old lady did not like us, and we did not like her. She often had devilled kidneys for breakfast, we never, but she paid extra for them; and when she had them, then inevitably the teeth went out of gear. Behind her back we were accustomed to mimic her; she knew it by some extraordinary intuition, mysterious to us for a long time, till we discovered that the maid-of-all-work had sneaked to her of what we said and did. She scarcely spoke to us at meals, except in a peremptory way, to have the mustard or toast passed to her. We took a malicious pleasure in neglecting to anticipate her wants, and forcing her to demand the butter or toast, etc., and not hearing her requests to have them passed till she raised her voice angrily and repeated them very loudly, when we immediately began to serve her with mustard, pepper, egg-spoons, empty sardine tins,

any and every thing, with mock eagerness to forestall her little wants. We were rude to the old lady, I admit, but she was very aggravating. However, my story has nothing to do with her, so I may dismiss her; it concerns an old gentleman who was our co-lodger and boarder at Miss Jones's pension. He was Major Cornelius, a thin, gray-haired man, with a refined face and the most delicately cut nostrils I think I ever saw. He was closely shaven. He was scrupulously careful about his clothes, and, though they were old and threadbare, no one could doubt that he was a gentleman by birth, breeding, and in feeling. There was something very sweet and prepossessing about his face. It was pale and grave, but a kindly smile lurked about the delicate mouth, and the gray eyes were soft. He was rather lame, from a wound he had received at Waterloo. He had his pension, and he lived on that; he had nothing besides to live on.

That, however, would have sufficed to keep him in comfort had he not in an evil hour stood security for a younger brother. We none of us knew the circumstances exactly, and I cannot now say what was truth and what was conjecture in the story whispered among us. My impression is that the brother, to whom he was devotedly attached, had not behaved honorably; he had left the country, and the Major's resources were strained to the utmost to meet the demand that came on him as security. We none of us ventured to allude to this topic; the disgrace rankled in the old man's heart; there was an ever-open wound there, which we were careful not to touch.

There was a childlike simplicity in the old man which rather amused us youngsters then; now, looking back on him, I find it was infinitely touching. We, however, laughed over it—we knew much more of the world than he. To Miss Jones and the old lady with the teeth he was courteous, with an old-fashioned courtesy that flattered them and won their hearts. He paid Miss Jones the same as we, £1 per week, but he dined daily at home. We used to say that Miss Jones set her cap at the Major, and that she only allowed him to re-

main on these moderate terms because she desired to become Mrs. Cornelius. I do not believe it was so. I think she strained a point so as to retain an old Waterloo officer in her house, to give it an air of superiority above other boarding-houses in the street.

Whenever I think of Major Cornelius, I remember his hair. I have already said it was thin; it was always elaborately brushed and watered, the hair drawn forward from behind the ear, and turned in a sort of curl over the temple. His collars were always clean and very stiff, and his black cravat tight about his throat.

A kind old man! When Robbins was ill with rheumatic fever, he sat up with him night after night, and ministered to him as a nurse. When Robbins was better, and able to receive our call, he sat up in his bed, leaning on the Major, who had his arm round him, and smiled and looked as pleased with our congratulations as though that vulgar Robbins had been his own son.

A kind old man! He allowed us youngsters to poke little harmless jokes at him. We called him the Centurion. When an Italian band stayed playing in Ebury Street, we would tell him his proper place was to lead it. On Sundays, when he arrived for dinner, one of us would ask, "Been to church, Major?" Then Robbins or another would answer: "Of course he has. What is the good of asking? Does not Scripture tell us that Cornelius was a *devout* centurion?" These little exhibitions of feeble fun he bore with great good humor, but we instinctively felt that there was a limit we must not transgress. The only man among us, coarse in perception, who could not recognize this was Robbins. When he pushed his buffoonery too far, the Major would rise, bow, and leave the room. Then the rest of us fell upon, sat upon, and flattened out Robbins.

The Major dined daily with Miss Jones at the lodging-house. We never knew of what that week-day dinner consisted, but we believed it was made out of the remains of the great Sunday feast. After chicken Sunday the fare must have been poor. After beef and mutton Sundays the meat no doubt was minced, and overlaid with a blanket of potato as cottage pudding—

much potato and little mince; or was served as haricot with carrot and large sippets of toast; or was lost in batter and called toad-in-a-hole; or buried in boiled dough. We did not know, we only guessed. No information could be extracted from the Major when we inquired after the "cold remains," or the "venerable relics," or "Duke Humphrey's dinner." He would answer gently, without a smile, "I assure you Miss Jones and I have fared sumptuously." The old man practised the severest economy. He denied himself everything he could; he drank only water at dinner and supper. Each of us had his separate jug; one had stout, another pale ale, another bitter beer; Robbins drank brandy and water; the old lady, Marsala. Ale meant to the Major fourpence a day, or two-and-fourpence a week, that is, over six pounds per annum, and the six pounds was needed for necessaries. His boots were to him a constant source of uneasiness, care and alarm. Boots come high and go quickly. The same pair was soled and resoled, till the crease over the toe on the outside roughened, then parted. Still they encased his feet. A little blackened grease filled the split, some sticking-plaster disguised it and was polished over; but these were expedients postponing the evil day, nothing more. That the Major pinched and screwed to raise the money for a new pair we all knew, and we all noticed the tenderness with which the new boots were regarded, how they were spared work, kept indoors when the streets were muddy and the rain fell.

The long slender fingers—they were nearly transparent—were wonderfully skilful with the needle. The Major repaired his own garments; we believed that he mended his own stockings. The maid told us his darning was beautiful. One day that Robbins stayed at home with a cold, he heard the Major ask the maid-of-all-work very kindly to let him have a hot flat-iron in his room. Next Sunday he appeared in brilliant—well, clothes, and we found he had turned an old pair himself; we noticed that they bulged in, instead of out, at the knee for some weeks, till they accommodated themselves to their altered situation.

If Major Cornelius was self-denying in the matter of drink and clothing, it was not that he could not appreciate generous liquor, and was not particular about dress. On the contrary, he was a good judge of wines, and he was fastidious about garments. I am sure that nothing galled his self-esteem more than to have to dress shabbily. He did as much of his own washing as he well could with a can of boiling water in his own basin. Washing is a heavy item in expenditure in London. I believe that some of the Major's garments were so thin, threadbare and patched that he was ashamed to send them to the wash, lest they should be commented on, and that therefore he did his best with them at home. His bedroom was high up, in the attic. He paid less than we, and was therefore obliged to put up with inferior accommodation. In winter he suffered much, I fear, from want of fire. The parlor fire was not lighted till 4 P. M., so that it was beginning reluctantly to burn up when the clerks returned from their offices. In his own room under the slates it was cold; nevertheless, he sat there when the bed was made, that is, from about noon to 4. Before that he remained in the parlor, watching the expiring of the little fire lit for show, not warmth, during breakfast. Only in the coldest weather would he descend to the kitchen for a few moments, to stand by the stove and warm his hands, while Miss Jones, "dish-shovelled," hid in the pantry. If the day were frosty, he walked out, to put his blood in circulation, and then his cheeks warmed into color—a bright color in his clear skin like the roses in a child's. That old cat with the teeth and the false front and the dirty collar rented the first floor, and had her own sitting-room, and a fire there; but from motives of delicacy, no doubt, and for fear of establishing a precedent, never invited the Major to it.

He was so modest that it was only casually we learned that he had once moved in the best circles, and had acquaintances high in military positions and titled. He visited and was visited by none of them. Since that affair of his brother he had withdrawn himself from his fellows; he shrank from meeting those who

knew the circumstances, and he suspected more of being aware of them than really did know. He was very proud—not haughty, understand—but with a sense of his honor and breeding which made him reserved. One luxury he would not give up, the luxury of giving gratuities to all who served him. I believe that the half-crowns as "vales" to the footmen who took his greatcoat, hat and gloves had much to do with his refusing the invitations he at one time received weekly from old brother officers and friends. He could not be mean, and to avoid the wound to his self-respect of seeming mean, he would not go to his fellows. At last, invitations, always declined, ceased to come in.

The winter of 1852 was cold. On November 18 the Duke of Wellington was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral with great display of military pomp. Our old friend was one of the veterans who walked in the procession. That winter saw the fall of the Conservative Ministry under Lord Derby, and the fall of something much more important—at least, to us, in Miss Jones's establishment—the falling to pieces of the Major's greatcoat. We had followed the progress of decay in that venerable article of clothing for some time with interest, and we had wondered what the Major would do when it was worn completely out. We hoped it would hold out the winter. It did not; it fell to pieces with the Derby Ministry.

The old man's face grew long; he fell into depression; no joke stirred him, no news interested him. It was obvious to all that his mind was engrossed with one absorbing question, how to provide himself with another greatcoat.

Then we residents under the roof of Miss Jones took counsel together, and discussed the possibility of providing him with one. Should we subscribe the requisite sum?—that is, among ourselves. We were none of us well off, but we were ready to make a sacrifice to help the old man to a new coat. As for that woman on the first floor with the teeth, we did not consult her —selfish beast! she ate her two kidneys herself and never offered a bite to the Major.

Although we would gladly have found the money, yet we felt that the plan was not feasible. The Major was sensitive on the subject of his poverty, and the offer would offend his pride. We must help him some other way. Then I suggested that the Major should be induced to write his reminiscences of Waterloo, and that his MS. should be sent to a magazine. Thus the money might be made by himself. He was far too humble a man to think of this expedient unprompted. We formed a deputation and waited on him, and entreated him, as a favor to ourselves, that he would put on paper his recollections of the Great Duke, and of Lord Uxbridge, of Picton, and of the battle, and then, that he would give his production to the world. He was frightened at the suggestion, and demurred to it. He had never written a line that had been printed, he knew nothing of literary form, he remembered nothing of real importance. We overruled his objections; we recalled one incident and anecdote after another with which we had been favored. We told him that we could not expect to be all our lives in Miss Jones's boarding-house, and that in our after-life we wished to possess a memorial of one whom we valued, and loved, and reverenced as a father.

The old man's eyes filled when we said this, he could not answer us; his mouth twitched, he held out his hand, and it shook as he squeezed each of ours in turn.

"Besides," I said, "I am an engrossing clerk, and so shall be able to give literary character to the Recollections, and write them in a legible hand, which goes, I understand, a long way with the reader to a publisher."

Now while the composition of this literary venture was in progress, the weather turned bitterly cold, and the Major caught a chill and coughed much. It was high time for him to provide himself with a greatcoat. He felt as though a cold hand were laid on his back between the shoulders, numbing him—in fact, the greatcoat had parted at the seam in the rear.

He overhauled the old garment, to see whether it would be possible for him to repair it himself. He tried the parted seam, but the threads would not hold,

they frayed the edges. No! only a professional could, so to speak, set the greatcoat on its legs again. Then he took it to a Mr. Dawkins, a small working tailor, who lived in a side lane; a man much given to brandy, who got drunk of a Sunday as a matter of course. On Monday he was dismal, his head ached, his hand shook, his views of life were socialistic. On Saturdays he was accommodating to his customers, whether in the matter of price or of repairs. The Major was not a man of the world or he would not have gone to Mr. Dawkins on Monday. On Sunday he had come to the conclusion that something must be done to his greatcoat or he would not be able to go to church again, and on Monday morning, accordingly, he turned into Little Back Street, and into the tailor's shop. He was at once almost stifled with the closeness of the room, the smell of damp cloth, hot irons and stale smoke. Mr. Dawkins sat on his table, his legs crossed, and without his shoes, his feet encased in not over-clean white stockings. With his toes he grasped the leg of a pair of trousers which he was reseating. Mr. Dawkins was a pasty-faced, smallpox-marked man, with thick black hair and a black, frowsy chin. His thumb-nail resembled the back of a tortoise. Round his neck, over his dirty gray waistcoat, hung a skein of black thread. He had been engaged for some minutes in trying to thread his needle when the Major entered. He had cursed the bad light, the needle's eye, the thread, and his wife in the back-room because his hand shook so that he could not thread the needle.

Major Cornelius soon saw that the time he had chosen was injudicious, but it was too late for him to withdraw. He knew the tailor, and the tailor knew him. Indeed, the man did many little jobs for the gentlemen at Miss Jones's. Mr. Dawkins's eyes at once recognized the customer, and then travelled down to his arm to see what hung over it for him to operate upon.

"How are you this morning, Mr. Dawkins?"

"Not at all well. Out of sorts all over. How can a man be well when he slaves all day and is worried all night by a teething baby? Squall, squall, squall!

Look at my hand how it shakes. I am unnerved by that odious brat. I wish it were not against the law to drown babies. Mine would soon go over Waterloo Bridge."

"How can you, Robert?" exclaimed his wife, looking into the room.

"Go back to your work. I was not speaking to you," ordered the tailor. "I don't know what sort of work you have for me to do, Major, but I tell you beforehand, I can only boggle it with this shaking hand. Till the baby's teeth are cut, no work worth looking at comes out of this shop. Well, Major, what is it?"

"I've come to—to—just—indeed—really—with——" When the Major was nervous, his eloquence forsook him, he expressed himself in adverbs and prepositions, and left the imagination to supply the verbs and substantives. He stood still, stuttering, thinking he had said his say, or forgetting what his purpose was.

"Well, sir! what do you want with me?" asked Dawkins, casting a scrutinizing glance at Major Cornelius, and examining every garment he wore with the eye of a critic, remorseless over defects. He looked for rent, hole, lost button, frayed sleeve, whitened elbow, worn trouser-foot, burst-out button-hole.

"The—the—greatcoat. I—that is—it—if—with—by any means—you see it is—well nearly—just a little the worse for wear, but otherwise good—no, not new—between the shoulders—yes, I see—at the elbow also—the collar, you observe—and the lappets—the tail, I think—with a little——"

Mr. Dawkins took the greatcoat and spread it over his knees.

"It is not quite new," said the Major, apologetically. "It is not, indeed, at all new; but, I think, with your admirable skill it may be given another lease of life, say, ten years' more service. It has been an old and excellent garment, has kept me snug, and screened me from many a chill. I have become attached to the coat, and do not wish to abandon it." Dawkins said nothing, but his face assumed a sarcastic expression the Major did not like. Then he shook his head, raised

the coat and held it before the window. The light revealed all its imperfections with cruel directness, it streamed through the rents, it struggled through the threadbare tracts. Then he turned the greatcoat on one side, and explored the right sleeve, and shook his head. Then he turned it over on the other side, and studied the left sleeve; then he shook his head again. Next he turned the pockets inside out; then he went over the collar, and broke into a short laugh. Then he examined the lining and shook the coat, and threw it contemptuously on the table at his feet.

"No good—but for the ragman." Major Cornelius turned deadly white. The room swam round with him, the floor heaved and fell, as though it were the cabin of a transport in the Bay of Biscay. He, who would have marched fearless to the mouth of a cannon, shook in his shoes before Mr. Dawkins.

"I think, Mr. Dawkins, you are mistaken. A bit of cloth put behind that angular tear, and a strip where the seam has parted, would make the old coat hold for some time longer; and if the cloth be thin, some lining and wadding, which are inexpensive, would supply the requisite warmth. The thing is feasible if you will give your valuable time and thought to it."

"Not possible. The cloth is utterly worn out. It will not bear a thread; look here!" he began to rip. The major uttered a cry—the only cry he had uttered since he was a baby. "In pity! Mr. Dawkins! Do not deal so roughly with my coat."

"Nothing can be done with it. Take it to the rag-shop."

"I have heard that cloth can be patched by placing a piece behind the rent, and a thin bit of gutta-percha, like goldbeater's skin, between it and the cloth of the garment, then when a hot iron is passed over the surface the gutta-percha dissolves into an adhesive substance gumming the two pieces together, and not a thread is used."

"No good. No good at all. Cloth is cloth, and this is worn to the last fibre."

"I only want it to hold out the winter. I am old. I

may not live to see another year. It would be a pity to buy a new greatcoat when I may not be able to enjoy it many years. I do not care to squander money, and it would be squandering—should I not live long to wear the coat."

"No," said Dawkins shortly; "dispose of it to the ragman. I won't have anything to do with it. You must have a new greatcoat."

"A new greatcoat."

"Yes, a new one."

"Humph! a greatcoat costs money."

"Of course. Greatcoats are not given away."

"They cost a great deal of money."

"To be sure, a great deal." On Monday Mr. Dawkins loved to put matters in a harsh light before his customers, to stagger and throw them back into attitudes of despair before the mighty expense in which clothing would involve them. He looked complacently at the Major, and drank in his misery.

"Suppose now," said Major Cornelius, nervously, "I was to—that is—but really—I doubt."

"Do you mean, what would be the cost of a new greatcoat?"

"Well—yes."

"That would depend on the quality of the cloth."

"I should not need the best and finest material; it would be unnecessary for an old man. One that would last my day would suffice. I should not wish to plunge into lavish expenditure."

"About four guineas."

"Four guineas!—Lord bless me!—did you say four guineas?"

"Not one penny less."

"Four guineas! Good heavens! Where am I?—that is——"

"You must have a substantial broadcloth—none of your shoddy, one-quarter staple, the rest devil's dust, that goes glossy at the seams and elbows in six months. Waste of money getting that. Not fit for a gentleman. Always looks shabby."

"Mr. Dawkins," exclaimed the Major, and the beads

of sweat came out upon his brow, "I entreat you to apply yourself to my old coat, and see if you cannot make it last out this winter. We are now at the close of January. There are only two more months of really cold weather before us. Make the coat last over them. During the spring and summer when there is rain I will not go out. Before next winter I shall have had time to think about a new greatcoat. This comes on me so suddenly, so bewilderingly, that—that——"

"Impossible. I don't choose to throw time and thread away."

Major Cornelius heaved a deep sigh, took the despised greatcoat, threw it over his arm, and left the tailor's shop and lane. He went along like a sleep-walker, purposeless, anywhere.

"What a predicament!" said he to himself. "I could not have believed it had I been told that the grand old coat was to serve me no more. Poor old thing! it was with me in my better days. My brother—my poor, dear, misguided brother!—how often has his hand leaned on this right sleeve. So, so! breaking down together, the old heart, the old confidence in life, the old coat, and the old head. O, my brother, my brother! If I could only hear from you, or of you again, that you were living as a man of honor ought to live, and striving to redeem the past, and to repay debts—I could die happy." As he thus walked, dreaming and despondent, he took the wrong road, and instead of coming home, found himself on Vauxhall Bridge. He was nearly run over by a cab, and he ran against a policeman. He trod in a bed of mud swept to the side of the road and splashed himself to the knees. When he found himself on the bridge, then he woke to the fact that he had strayed. Then, all at once, a cheering thought flashed upon him, and he held up his head. "To be sure!" he said, "now I remember, the young fellows often told me never to go near Dawkins on a Monday; I will go to him on Saturday, and offer him a little bottle of best brandy—that will warm the cockles of his heart, and dispose him to make the most of my old coat. It may not be quite the right thing to make use

of his failing for my own ends, but it cannot be helped; I cannot possibly purchase a new great-coat. Four guineas are—well—four guineas." Encouraged by this hope, the old man bought a bottle of excellent Cognac, put it under his greatcoat, and on Saturday revisited the tailor.

"How do you do, Mr. Dawkins? Better than on Monday."

"Middling, Major, only middling."

Then the old gentleman produced the bottle.

"Look here, Mr. Dawkins, I've brought you some real grand old Cognac. I pray you to accept it of me."

The tailor was delighted, his face lit up. He was profuse in his thanks. But the moment the crafty Major approached the subject of the greatcoat, Mr. Dawkins's face fell, and he said: "No, it is of no use! You must have a new greatcoat."

"Is it not really possible?"

"Absolutely impossible. Now, look here, Major. For you I will bate a point, and make the greatcoat for three-pound-ten. That is my lowest figure. Leave it to me, I will give you good cloth and good cut and good needlework. Three-pun-ten."

Major Cornelius again left the tailor's. He had little heart to finish his Reminiscences. Finish them, however, he did, under much provocation from us. We sat in conclave over them, and suggested touches here and there; some were accepted by general acclamation, others rejected. Robbins wanted to trim one or two of the anecdotes and give them additional point; but the old man would allow of no improvement at the expense of truth. We greatly wanted him to corroborate or contradict the famous story of the "Up, Guards, and at them!" as some were disposed to relegate these words to the limbo of mythical *mots*, but he had been in another part of the field from Lord Wellington, and was not in a position to pass an opinion on the authenticity of the memorable order. I, as a good scribe, wrote out a clean copy of the Recollections, and the MS. was sent to one of the magazines. It was accepted.

"I wonder what I shall receive for it?" he said.

"I dare say four guineas," said Robbins.

"That is about the figure," said another.

Now, some thirty years ago it was the way with certain magazines—I do not say all—to keep a MS. some three or four months, then to print it, and to pay for it perhaps three months later, so that six months elapsed between the acceptance of a short article and payment for it. Some magazines kept MS. still longer, and paid for it still more reluctantly, and these magazines in good repute. Others never paid at all. Major Cornelius knew nothing of this, nor did we, all as inexperienced as himself. We supposed that his Reminiscences would be out in a week, and paid for at once.

We were all so certain that, as the MS. was accepted, it would be paid for, and so certain, also, that the Major would receive no sum less than four guineas for it, that he ventured again to the tailor's, and ordered the greatcoat, which was promised him for three-pound ten. I believe we—that is, all Miss Jones's boarders, except the old lady with the teeth—were as much interested in the greatcoat as the old man himself. We held our breath when we heard that the coat was ordered, we were impatient for it to be fitted, we were consumed with eagerness to see it worn.

First, the cloth had to be chosen, and the color decided on. Then Major Cornelius had to submit to the ignominy of being measured. At last the day dawned on which he was to be fitted. He went with trembling heart to the house of Dawkins, and had to put his arms through two holes in something which was supposed to be the coat, but which was a mere tabard of bits of cloth stitched together, with long stitches of an inch each—of white cotton. Why white cotton is always used for the preliminary stitching together, I should like to know. Mr. Dawkins went round the Major several times, with a bit of flesh-colored chalk between his lips, and grunted, and raised and depressed his eyebrows, and made chalk sweeps with the thing that looked like pink soap, especially under the arms, which tailors never, as far as my experience reaches, cut right at first, and allow for sufficiently. Then he made pink

lines down the Major's back. Then he caught him by the lappets and gave him a tug and jerk toward him, and finally dismissed him with a "That'll do."

At last the greatcoat arrived, brought by Mr. Dawkins himself. He brought it in the evening, when we were all at home, except Robbins, who was at the theatre. We sat round the room and saw the garment put on, expressing our delight in low murmurs and sudden ejaculations. Mr. Dawkins was proud of his performance. The major stood in the middle of the room; the table was thrust aside that all might see. Mr. Dawkins pulled the tail down with a jerk; then he buttoned the coat across the chest; then he made the major raise and depress his arms, like a cock flapping his wings. It fitted to perfection. It was faultless. The tailor drew back and looked at it, with his head on one side; then he turned his head the other way; then he walked around the major. No—nothing needed rectification. Then he looked at us all, one after another, seeking commendation. He received it. Perfection is not often encountered in life; but that coat was perfection.

"You will find the bill in the pocket, sir," said Mr. Dawkins. "After three months, 5 per cent."

When Mr. Dawkins was gone, then all restraint on our enthusiasm was removed; we almost danced round the major; our expressions of admiration were lavish, and, I must admit, extravagant. The old man smiled, and bore a little banter, mixed with the congratulations, with great good-humor. His pleasant face was lighted with a smile, and a little—just a little—pride. He was conscious in his heart, he felt in every fibre of his system, that he looked well in the new greatcoat.

"Is it warm?" asked one.

"Warm! It sends a glow through me," he replied. "Now, my dear friends, I will confide something to you. I am going out to dinner, to-night, with my old friend and fellow-soldier, Sir Archibald Busby. The tailor has been very good; he has kept his word, and given me the greatcoat to go in. He promised it for to-day, and, relying on his promise, I accepted the in-

vitation. I could not go in the old greatcoat; it was inconveniently thin, and hardly respectable."

Going to dine with General Sir Archibald Busby, K. C. B.! We all rose in our own estimation, because we ate at the same table, and slept under the same roof, and warmed our shins at the same fire with one who was invited to dine with that distinguished soldier, Sir Archibald Busby—a K. C. B. also! How we would talk to our relatives and acquaintances of our friend Cornelius, who dined with Sir Archibald and Lady Busby! We must positively see the major in his dress-coat, and help him on with his greatcoat when he went forth. It was time for him to dress, so he went upstairs. One of us expedited the universal drudge with shaving water, another took all the loose hairs out of the general clothes-brush, a third went down to the boot-hole to make sure that the old gentleman's boots were brushed up brilliant as patent leather.

He came down at last, looking very bright and fresh and delightful. The curl on his temple was turned with consummate art. His dress-suit was without a speck. It had not been worn for several years. His collar was very erect, and white, and military-looking. We hovered about him in the passage. The old lady on the first floor came out upon the landing and glowered over the banisters, and nearly dropped her teeth out of her jaws. Miss Jones rose to the surface from downstairs; the maid-of-all-work, with her nose blackened and polished, looked on in amazement and far-off adoration.

"What time may we expect you home, Major?" asked Miss Jones.

"About twelve or half-past. I shall not be late."

"Mary Jemima shall sit up," said Miss Jones.

"Oh no! we will all sit up. We can't sleep till we have seen the Major return from his dinner. O, Major Cornelius! what ravages you will commit this evening on the hearts of the ladies! You are perfectly irresistible. If only they could see you in the greatcoat!"

He laughed; then three of us rushed and knocked our heads together in our eagerness to help him into

the new greatcoat. When we had encased him, and buttoned him in, we made him turn round under the gas-light.

"Don't you feel tempted to kiss him, Miss Jones?" asked one of the youngsters.

"For shame! Oh, fie!" Then Miss Jones went down the kitchen stairs with a blush on her face; and the maid-of-all-work went off into convulsive giggles.

"Good-evening, sir!" we called, as he went to the door. "We shall all sit up for you; and may you well enjoy yourself."

As he had his hand on the door, the postman's rap came loud, and made the old man draw back with a start. However, he had the door open and had faced the postman before the letter was put in the box.

"For you, sir."

"All right, thank you." He had no time to look at the letter then; he slipped it into his greatcoat pocket, and went forth.

. . . . . .

We clubbed together for a bottle of British brandy, we heaped up the fire with what remained of coals in the box, after Miss Jones was gone. We got the "general" Jemima to supply us with hot water and tumblers. We persuaded Miss Jones to let us have a bowl full of sugar, to be charged in our bills. We sat up and discussed the Major. We were so pleased that the dear old man had gone out; it would brighten his life. He would laugh and tell his stories, and recall old reminiscences with his fellow-veterans; he would associate once more with those in his own rank of life. We did not say aloud, but we felt, that he belonged to a different order than ourselves. We were jolly fellows, good fellows, no nonsense about us, and all that; but we had not his polish of mind and manner, that indescribable something which forms an invisible yet impassable barrier between the classes in life.

Twelve o'clock! He promised to be home by midnight, or shortly after, and the Major was punctual. At 12:20 we heard his key in the door, but he seemed unable to open it. One of us went into the passage to

unlatch it. Two or three of us stood up and filled the doorway of the sitting-room.

"The old gentleman has taken so much port that he can't hit the keyhole. Wicked old Major!" said one.

But, when the door opened, and we saw him in the glare of the hall light, the rising joke died away on our lips.

He arrived in his dress-suit, without the greatcoat.

"Good gracious, Major! Why! what is the meaning of this? Where is your greatcoat?"

He came in, looking very white and depressed, the curl over his forehead out of twist, his collar limp, his shoulders stooping. He walked more lamely than usual. We made him come into the warm room. His hands were like ice. We forced him to take some spirit and water. We tried to rouse him. It was in vain. He looked utterly crushed.

"What is the matter, sir? What has happened?"

After a while we learned what had occurred. The evening had passed very pleasantly; never more so. When he left the drawing-room, he descended to the hall and asked for his greatcoat. It was lost. It was nowhere hanging up. It had not fallen behind a bench. It was not lying across a chair. Then the porter said he was very much afraid that some rascal, taking advantage of the door being open upon the arrival of a guest, had slipped into the hall unobserved, and had walked off with the newest and best of the greatcoats. Thus was the disappearance accounted for.

"Shall we lend you one of Sir Archibald's to go home in?" said the servant.

"No, thank you." So the Major walked home in his dress-suit, without his new greatcoat. That was lost—lost forever. There was but the smallest prospect of its being recovered. The poor old man was utterly cast down. Without the greatcoat he could no longer walk abroad respectably. He sat in the armchair, with his head down and his hands shaking. We did our best to encourage him; but what could we promise? He could not possibly raise the money for a new greatcoat. Besides, this one, now lost, was unpaid for. He

would not take more than a little drop of brandy and water. He could not look before him. The future was not to be faced without a greatcoat. Presently he stood up and lit his candle; he would go to bed. He was tired; perhaps to-morrow he would be better.

We squeezed his hand, and sat speechless, listening to his foot as he went upstairs. He dragged his lame leg wearily after him.

"Poor old chap!" said I; "he seems done for completely."

Next morning we were all assembled at breakfast—that is, all but the Major—when a rap came at the front door and a ring at the bell. Jemima answered. A moment after she came in with the greatcoat—yes, the identical greatcoat, over her arm. Sir Archibald's valet had brought it. He had seen it, with the other, in the hall, had believed it to belong to a gentleman staying in the house, and, to avoid confusion, had removed it to the library. The mistake had only been found out when all the guests were gone, and the servant had come over the first thing in the morning.

I ran upstairs, to rouse the Major with the joyful news. I knocked at his door, but received no answer. I opened it and looked in. I saw the old man on his knees by his bedside. He was saying his prayers. I would not disturb him, so drew back. He was a long time over these same prayers. I looked in again. He had not stirred. Then, with a start, I saw that the bed had not been slept in, and the Major was in his dress-suit. I went up to him and touched him. He was dead. The loss of the greatcoat had been the last disappointment he could bear. The brave old heart had given up the battle, and had stopped beating.

When afterward the greatcoat pockets were searched, there were found in them two letters. One was the bill for the coat; the other bore an American stamp. It was from his brother—a penitent letter; he was now doing well, and he enclosed to Major Cornelius a draft for a hundred pounds. The letter had not been opened.

One suspects that proud Mistress Lois Frothinghame, for all her cleverness, loved Christmas Day in the old Puritan time as well as we love it today. Her interesting story is told by Mary C. Hungerford.

THE FIRST AMERICAN PLUM-PUDDING.

NOT many years after the *Mayflower* brought its freight of stern Puritans to Plymouth, a shipload of more opulent Pilgrims from the mother country made landing at Boston and travelled through dangerous ways to the place now called New Haven, where many of them settled.

But Master Frothinghame, and perhaps a score of others, with Roger Ludlam as their leader, came on still further to found a settlement called in the Indian tongue Umguowa.

The goodly store of pelf these wealthier colonists brought with them gave them some comforts which the Plymouth settlers lacked. But clearing lands for tillage, building rude but substantial houses of logs and stones and opening roads through the forests, fell equally to their lot. Their earlier lives of ease had ill-fitted them for such unaccustomed work, but freedom to think as they liked and to worship as they pleased compensated them for toil and hardships. Oneness of purpose and congeniality of interest made the social life of the small community very pleasant. It was like one large family, with Roger, the good man who worked with them on week-days and preached to them Sundays, for its head.

One of the most remarkable women in the little colony was sweet Mistress Frothinghame, who for love of her husband and the hope of future good to her little sons, came willingly from a home of great luxury to the unknown perils of life in a wilderness. If she ever repented of the step she had taken, no word of regret passed her lips, and her struggles as the years went on

to make up to her growing boys the advantages of education they had lost, are matters of record. But brave wife, devoted mother and industrious housewife though she was, she had in some inadvertent way given offence to one family.

It might have been because her farthingales and kirtles, made and remade by her own deft fingers from the store of raiment she had brought with her from England, had a style and fashion that no other one's clothes acquired, or it might have been a nameless something in her which showed that she never forgot her noble extraction, but whatever the cause, Mistress Jonas Crief and her sour-visaged husband had long ceased to think of her with affection.

Good Master Frothinghame, with his head full of projects for the betterment of the colony, knew nothing about this slight break of harmony. In fact, so great was his abstraction from common affairs that unless reminded he would leave his home in the morning all unconscious that he had not broken his fast. It was to him that Roger Ludlam and Jonas Crief, an elder, came one Christmas morning, as he worked in the field, with the grave complaint that in his house the Popish holiday, as they termed it, was kept with unholy observances.

"Feasting and gluttony and gayety of apparel is not what one would look to see in the home of one whose godliness is a strong stay in our midst; and yet such customs are said to rule each year under your roof," said Roger, with a mingling of acerbity and mildness.

"And we look to you to pluck out heresies and make an example of evildoers, even if the blow strikes one of your own household," said Elder Jonas, sharply.

"Dark riddles have no meaning to me," said Master Frothinghame, looking puzzled and worried. "To my wife, Lois, I leave all family affairs, she being most capable; and, like a good wife, willing to spare me to her own cost. In the matter of observances her belief is one with mine, and I can stake my credit on her practice."

"You are willing, then," said Jonas, "to take us to

your dwelling now with no notice given, and let us see for ourselves this day, the 25th of December, what manner of preparation it is that wafts rich odors of spice, in the smoke of burning, to offend the noses of believers?"

"Most willing, truly," replied Master Frothinghame, leading the way to his house. Entering with his guests into the large room, he found his wife cooking dinner and listening to her second son, who was reading well, in his pleasant boyish voice, from a much-thumbed "Life of Columbus." The younger boys were attending to the reading while they quietly set the table for the midday meal, and the little maid Margaret, the one daughter born since their life in the new country began, sat in her oldest brother's lap, quiet as a mouse, listening to the reading, and keeping bright eyes on her mother's movements.

The house-mistress gave a cordial, if somewhat stately, greeting to her husband's friends, who seemed to feel their errand awkward till Master Frothinghame, in a few words, explained their purpose to his wife.

"Some light bread, turnips boiled and sauced with cream, as my lads like them, and fish caught by Johnny, the lame Indian, who takes his fare for his fee, is the feast which I give my good lord and his children to-day, and if it please him to ask his friends to share it, there is enough for all."

Good Roger bowed in courteous appreciation, but his elder, not so easily placated, turned a prying nose toward the fire, saying: "There is a savory smell from yonder pot, good dame, that minds me of the snares by which Satan pampers the lusts of the body in the countries where this day is made a season of sinful idolatry. What boileth in that great pot of thine?"

"A quick poultice for an aching breast," was the answer.

"And what aches it, and who is it feels the hurt?" —this with an ugly sneer, quite unworthy the saintly character of an elder.

"It is mine own heart that aches with pity for those who let evil spite poison them against the neibrsogh

whom they should love with all tenderness, as children of one Father."

Voice and tone were moderate, but there was a flash in the dark eyes which made the mother's children look at her curiously, and Oliver, the eldest boy, drawn by that and by the hateful look in the elder's face, put down the little maid and came to her side, standing there straight and tall as herself, with an air which showed he would defend her if need came. But no more words were said then, and the dinner being served, the master signed to his visitors to take their places at his table, and after the boys had gathered thereat, the long fervent blessing was solemnly asked by Roger, at the host's request, and they all quietly took their seats.

The master tried to maintain some conversation as he filled the plates handed him in silence by his wife, but there was a great constraint, and all subjects fell to the ground after a brief trial.

It was considered a privilege to eat of viands cooked by Mistress Frothinghame, so greatly was her culinary skill esteemed, but to-day none had appetite, except the boys. Their stomachs, unlike their elders, came under no sway of mental disturbance, and they feasted as hungrily as if no adverse judgment menaced their mother. At last, even their knives rested, and their father turned as if to give the signal to rise, but Jonas's eyes, as prying as his nose, saw plainly expectancy writ on all the young faces before him, and delaying like the boys to rise, he turned ill-boding looks of question upon the master, saying:

"Forgive me, as my errand is righteously one of appointed search, if I wait as your young sons do, for what cometh next."

"Surely, friend, what is for them is for thee, but more have we not than thou seest, for on days when God's mercy sends us fish we cook no meat, counting the one enough for strength."

At a modern table, where conversation is likely to be kept in the hands of the youngsters, there would have been eager explanations from the boys, but in those rigid days, in their parents' presence they spake

not unless first spoken to, so now they were silent, although Jonas looked at them in a steady way which made their father turn to question them. Before they could answer, Roger interrupted.

"Cease," he cried, "would you make a son commit his mother and give him that to remember which might put upon his life a burden that could have no surcease?"

"Then," cried Jonas, nothing cowed, "I ask Dame Frothinghame not to cut us short, but give us all the dinner she has provided for this particular—ahem—yes, this very particular day."

With her handsome head lifted defiantly and a most scornful curl to her delicate lips, the lady, who had not yet found time or inclination to take a chair at the table, raised from the great bubbling iron pot a covered tin pail, and eagerly eyed by the young lads and the little maid Margaret, handily turned its contents upon a shining platter, where it rested, a sight for men and boys, a bold, undisguised pudding, brown and luscious, with fat sides quivering, as if in dread of the inimical regards it had to face. Carrying the platter high and bearing herself like a queen, the Dame set it down upon the table in front of her astonished husband and, stepping again to the fire, brought a skillet of hot sauce, which she poured lavishly over the pudding, unheeding the trouble in her husband's eyes, as, gasping the one word, "Lois!" he sank back upon his chair. She did not mind the deep, bitter sigh that came from good Roger's sorry heart, or the malicious glee with which Jonas rubbed his bony hands together and wagged his bald head. Roger gazed gloomily at the light and toothsome pudding, the first his eyes had seen for many a year, then gathered himself together for his duty.

"This is matter for counsel," he said. "Woman, hast thou, unknown to the husband who has the rule over thee, made laws for thyself, and this day, which of a purpose it is commanded to ignore, commemorated with feastings? Speak if thy fault is unknown to thy husband, and keep the sin on thine own head."

"There is more than seems on the surface," interrupted Jonas rudely, with a greedy eye on the pudding.

"We know well sweet spices and plums can only be had here by supernatural agencies. There must have been strange dealings before all these foreign sweets could come to hand."

"No witchcraft, if that is what you mean, friend Jonas, but a woman's invention. Raisins, it is true, are not to be had, but in the summer sweet berries grow on the bushes about, and them I dried with care and to-day used where plums should have been. And to flavor the sauce that is innocent of wine I used a precious stick of cinnamon and bits of candied lemon that were in the box my sister sent me from England. I had not suet and the other rich things wherewith we made our puddings in my father's house; but with slices of bread buttered and sprinkled between with berries and spice and left to soak all night in a custard of eggs, and then boiled with might all the hours of this fair morning, did I strive to make even a poor imitation that should please my sons and make them note this day."

She took her seat as she ended, and, drawing the pudding toward her, began to cut it with a hand that did not tremble.

"Stay," cried Roger, rising and putting on a judicial and ministerial majesty that should make evildoers quake, "you dare to say that you wish to note this day"—here his tones grew awful—"this day, which we all, freed now from the yoke of superstition, have elected should be forgotten. Why, why should you wish to remember it?" His voice fell suspiciously as he ended; it was cruelly hard for him to have to condemn the wife of his own particular friend.

"Because," she said, with the defiant fire in her eyes softening, and sweet, tender curves coming to her lips as she looked over to her husband and then at the wondering children, and from them to her stern old pastor, "because my children must never forget that this was their parents' wedding day, sixteen years ago. The cares of a hard life crowd it out of their father's memory, but a little better dinner, to make the children glad it has come round again, can do no harm, I think. We can do but little here in the wilderness, but even a lit-

tle gives the children a reminder of their mother's life before she changed it for a still happier one as their father's wife."

She had routed her enemy. The minister turned a reproachful look on Jonas, and Master Frothinghame, though stern and undemonstrative by nature and the teaching of the times, stepped quickly to his wife's side and clasped her hand in his, then thundered a scathing rebuke, which made that mischievous hypocrite, Jonas Crief, shrink from the house.

And, ever since that time, the numerous descendants of the Frothinghames disdain on Christmas Day to eat of the orthodox English plum-pudding, with its chopped amalgamation of indigestible richness, but copy the ancient recipe, with the substitution of berries for raisins, which has descended from their proud and beautiful ancestor, who made, so far as known, the first American plum-pudding.

The perils of wealth, as illustrated by the career of a French edition of Mr. Bishop's "Brown-stone Boy," are graphically described in this story, by Paul Hervieu, made into English by Elizabeth Elliot.

MY FRIEND LEONARD.

THE first time I saw him was on the shore of Lake Gaube in the Pyrenees. The noonday sun was dazzling upon the lake and the mountains, and I had established myself in a sheltered nook under my umbrella.

A young fellow, very elaborately dressed, made his appearance. He advanced to the slip, where a little boat was moored, and there affecting not to observe my presence, he surveyed with an important and critical air the distant glacier of Oulettes, and the steep granite heights of the formidable Pique-Loque. The little man had a long nose, a lifeless complexion, white lips and a feverish eye. From a strap across his hollow chest hung a cup and an elaborately cased field-glass. His thin legs were equipped with new gaiters, and his bony fingers grasped an iron-mounted stick, half again as tall as he was.

The newcomer persisted in his inspection of the mountain, and evidently sought to excite my interest by drawing down his brows in his careful scrutiny.

"For pity's sake!" I cried at last to gratify him, "you are equipped as elaborately as if you meant to climb Viquemale!"

The young man did not relish my patronizing tone, for he looked me over leisurely and superbly before deigning to reply:

"That is in fact just what I mean to do."

His laborious exaggeration of dignity amused me, and I continued the conversation.

Pretty soon a gentleman of about forty emerged from the neighboring inn. He had an air of repletion, and came slowly toward us, but stopped some little distance away. He examined me with a suspicious air as he

stroked his fine black beard. Then drawing from his pocket a nail-file, he used it thoroughly, without intermitting his study of my person. I paid no attention to him, and he finally decided to speak.

"Are you ready, Leonard?" he asked. "It is time for you to be starting."

"Yes, uncle," said the little fellow.

At this moment two guides brought down to the boat their hatchets and bags, a photographic camera, a gun, some wraps and fagots.

"It's going to be cold to-night," murmured one of them, glancing at the direction of the wind.

Having assured himself by a glance that I was listening, the uncle said,

"Take care of him, my good fellows. You must see that he is well wrapped up, and has a good shelter among the rocks."

The other guide grumbled:

"There's no sense in it! Why couldn't he go like the rest of the world, sleep at the inn here and start at daybreak?"

At this protest the uncle's face showed signs of uneasiness; he felt he ought to explain to me with what solicitude he had arranged for his nephew's expedition. Touched with an instinctive sympathy for the imprudent boy, I risked a word of advice.

"This child, sir," I said, "is going to run a great risk. Believe me that in the mountain sleeping outdoors is a greater danger than the precipices."

There was in the uncle's face for a second such a gleam of hostility that I was prepared for some insolent rejoinder, but he mastered himself instantly, and suddenly burst into a forced laugh.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he cried. "You talk of him as if he were a child. It is evident that you do not know him. In the first place, he is thirteen years old! And then he is a determined fellow, I tell you. A determined fellow, aren't you, Leonard?"

Leonard tried to laugh as hard as his uncle. A nervous shiver shook his frail limbs, and his eyes looked big with fright. His uncle added, as if in conclusion,

"Here's your chance, my boy, to be young and brave. Take advantage of it. I only wish I were in a condition to make the ascent with you."

And to assure me more completely of his own incapacity, he emitted an insignificant cough, which only attracted my attention to his deep chest and generally substantial appearance.

Having embraced his relative, Leonard took leave of me with a pretentious salutation.

"Good luck!" I murmured, and the skiff glided off in the sunshine, leaving far behind a trail of gold on the emerald of the lake.

That evening at the hotel-table three youngsters opposite me were chattering, instead of eating their soup. They were consumed with a mixture of admiration and jealousy for one of their comrades.

"He had some chance, that Leonard, he was lucky. His people let him climb Viquemale all alone. They let him drive a four-in-hand. He had already been up in a balloon. He always carried a loaded pistol in his pocket, just for fun. Yes, a real pistol, not just a pistol for caps. A six-barrelled revolver that would go off. Dost thou understand that, old fellow?"

They all called each other that. It was "Yes, old fellow," and "No, old fellow."

My neighbor at table leaned toward me.

"At Marseilles," he said, "I knew very well Mr. and Mrs. Gasparel, whose son Leonard it is who is turning all these young heads."

"Ah?" said I, interrogatively.

"Mr. Gasparel," he said, "had made millions in oil, and came near dying childless. It was only late in life he had one son, and not much of a one to boast of either! The father and mother are both dead, and Leonard has no relative but his mother's brother, who with his wife's assistance devotes himself entirely to the orphan's education. The better to attend to his charge, the uncle has even sold out the business he was engaged in at Cette. This is generally thought to be the more meritorious as the Migets have no fortune."

Then, lowering his voice,

"Between ourselves, the business amounted to very little, and the pretext for selling out was very timely. Now the Migets, with their pupil, have left their own country, and, settling nowhere, travel incessantly from North to South, from East to West. I doubt if this régime is exactly the healthiest for young Gasparel. He doesn't look to me like a long-liver."

"What motive brought them here?"

"Mr. Miget's health. He appears very robust, but two years ago he got some lung trouble, going wild duck-shooting with his nephew in the Camargue marshes —a pastime well known to be very unhealthy."

After a moment's silence, I remarked casually how much anxiety it must cause the Miget family to have such an enviable fortune linked to such a frail life. My neighbor gave me a shrewd glance from his keen gray eyes.

"Yes," said he gravely. "It is a cruel uncertainty. The husband and wife think of it day and night. They can neither eat nor sleep for thinking of it."

We exchanged, with reserve, a parting glance. The dinner was over.

I went to bed and dreamed of Leonard. The next day I looked out for him, but all that day he did not appear at Cauterets. The thought of him haunted me, however, and, besides, the sound of his name reiterated by childish voices rang in my ears wherever I went. At the four corners of the Esplanade, in the Garden of the Cæsars, on the promenade, shrill, incessant, excited young voices chanted the glory of Leonard. A frisky and dangerous horse pranced by. Leonard was in the habit of riding him. In a glass case in a dealer's window was one of the poisonous lizards found among the rocks. The popular hero had a collection of them.

At eight o'clock in the evening Leonard had not yet returned to the hotel. A heavy rain was falling.

In spite of myself I was anxious. I went to the theatre, then to the club. I lost my money and my umbrella was stolen, or my money was stolen and I lost my umbrella. At any rate, I returned without money or umbrella, but at least distracted from other thoughts

by this adventure. On my way I saw the last jet of gas burning in a café. As I approached, I saw at a table outside, under the damp awning, Leonard, accompanied by a tall bony woman, with a majestic bonnet crowned by a purple bird of paradise.

I was delighted to see the little tourist safe and sound, but, on the other hand, I regretted the familiar patronage with which I had accosted the young millionaire the previous evening. I feared his friends would consider me designing, and I passed on pretending not to recognize him.

It was he who hailed me with the greatest familiarity.

"Well!" he cried, "Here I am back, you see!"

"You should be in bed," I replied, "rather than drinking brandy at this hour, out here in the cold, after such fatigue——"

The lady with the purple bird bit her lip, and replied with cold scorn,

"It is not by bringing up boys wrapped in cotton wool that you make men of them."

With a hand-shake I said good-night to Leonard, singularly interested in the curious fate which had accidentally come under my notice.

The next morning, as my valise was placed in front of the carriage waiting for me, Leonard came down to the hotel entrance. Without relaxing his grave demeanor, he was carrying a butterfly-net, and the three little youngsters who had sat opposite to me at table fluttered about him.

"Ah!" he said to me. "Are you off? That's too bad! I liked you."

"Indeed?" I said. "I too would have been delighted to have a more intimate acquaintance with you."

"Won't you give me your address?" he asked. "It would entertain me to write to you. You will answer, won't you?"

"Of course," I replied, and the carriage rolled away.

As I turned for a last look, Leonard waved me good-by, with his three admirers still hovering about him as he started off with his net. I did not doubt that the

famous pistol would be of the party—not a cap pistol, a true pistol with six barrels, that would go off!

The proposed correspondence did not take place. Still, I often thought of my friend Leonard. Yes, my friend, although we had no point in common of age, taste or position, and although our entire intercourse was limited to three conversations which altogether did not occupy ten minutes. No matter, he was still my friend Leonard, and it was four years before I again saw a trace of him. But often the thought of him recurred to me, and I found myself wondering, "And Leonard? Is he dead yet? Yes or no?"

Often when I could not get to sleep, and in the vain effort to do so tried to banish all remembrance of the day's events from my mind, in its empty spaces the thought of Leonard would recur and take possession of me.

One evening at the Varietés I was much puzzled by the signs made to me by a black coat in the rear of a stage-box. Above the dazzling white shirt-bosom the shadow of the draperies prevented my distinguishing any feature of the face. Two rather questionable looking ladies occupied, with a bored semi-attention to the play, the front of the box, and were overwhelmed with attentions by a pair of masculine hands which I saw supply them with fans, opera-glasses and caramels, from time to time interrupting these exercises to make frantic signs to me. Toward the end of the act I started for the mysterious stage-box.

At the threshold an elaborately attired young man awaited me. The curb of his stiff collar lent a noble carriage to his chin, his buttonhole was decorated with a camellia.

"Leonard!" I cried, with some emotion.

"Rascal!" he replied, beaming, "at first you did not recognize me!"

I replied that he was remarkably changed—and very advantageously—an atrocious lie! In fact, aside from his downy budding mustache, I recognized in him exactly the same shrivelled little monkey-face, with the long nose, like a parrot's beak, which I recollected.

Leonard conducted me into the box, where his uncle Miget rose to receive me. In his fine black beard white hairs were visible. He was thinner, too, and looked rather worn.

"No excuses!" said Leonard. "You shall take supper with us, shan't he, ladies?"

I must own that the ladies did not insist, and it was perhaps for this reason that I accepted the invitation. The young fellow drew me into the corridor, and hastened to recount to me his exuberant joy at being launched upon society.

"Ah! it is fine!" he babbled. "Parties, operas, suppers, every pleasure! You can't imagine how good my uncle is to me. We live like two comrades!"

"And your aunt? What does she say to all this dissipation?"

"Oh! she doesn't know half. At any rate it is certain that she never got along better with her husband."

This information was sufficient for me, but Leonard gave me much more. It was his Uncle Miget who had made the acquaintance of the two charming young ladies who were with them, ladies of excellent education and musicians to their fingers' ends.

The supper was rather dizzy. Leonard ordered and drank innumerable glasses of port, of whiskey, of vermouth and of champagne. Finally one of the highly educated ladies interposed, saying she forbade him to drink any more unless he first put her name in his will.

"Let him alone!" cried the other. "He will live to bury us all, you will see."

Thereupon Leonard proceeded to unfold the plans he was forming for his coming of age. He was very proud of them, but I cannot say they enhanced my admiration for my friend. His uncle listened in silence; his opaque black eyes told no tales of what his thoughts were.

At two o'clock in the morning, no one having started to leave, I made a pretence of an important errand to do on my way home. No one remarked the singularity of the time chosen, and Leonard escorted me as far as the stairway. There I said to him quietly,

"One word of advice. If you want to enjoy the bril-

liant future your ample fortune opens to you, take care of your health! Sleep at night, eat in the daytime, and moderate your taste for what the Migets encourage as if they wished to inherit your fortune!"

It was rather brutal. So much the worse. Leonard recoiled a step, and said severely:

"Upon my word! You are drunk! You tread upon my deepest affections. Good-by!"

I tried to say a word.

"No," he said. "Good-by!"

And I left.

This interview with Leonard, where he appeared to such disadvantage, was fatal to the friendship he had inspired in me. Leonard was no longer "my friend Leonard." I forgot him completely.

But while we may never meet on the stairway people who have apartments in the same house with us, there is, on the other hand, a fate which delights in bringing us face to face with the most unlikely people, at the most unexpected times and in the most impossible places.

Last winter at Mentone, on the mole beside the dazzling blue-and-white of the Mediterranean, I passed a consumptive's wheeled chair. Pushed along by a lackey in rich livery, one of these unfortunates, in spite of the sun's ardor, shivered among his heap of cushions.

A couple followed with slow footsteps, dressed in half-mourning. The wife, small and dark, had a sweet face. The husband was looking back and I saw only his thin side-whiskers. Suddenly he turned toward me.

"Ah!" he exclaimed cordially. "Enchanted to see you again!" and turning to his companion, "Let me present you to Madame Gasparel."

I congratulated the young couple heartily, and finding nothing better to add, asked after Monsieur and Madame Miget.

"What!" cried Leonard. "Do you not know of the catastrophe? On the lake of Bourget? All the papers spoke of it. Oh! my poor friend! God keep you from such a sight!"

He grasped his wife's arm, the better to describe the scene.

"I was sitting in the bow of the boat. My uncle was rowing, my aunt steered, I was fishing. One moment I leaned far over to draw in my line. Suddenly it seemed to me the boat rocked. I glanced backward. I saw my aunt, who had risen and was coming softly toward me. My uncle explained to me later that she was frightened at my position, and was coming to draw me back. Alas! I do not know what happened to her, but at the moment I turned she drew back so suddenly that she fell backward into the water!"

"And she was drowned?" I exclaimed.

"She was drowned!" repeated the nephew, in a sepulchral tone which I felt contrasted with my own. At the remembrance his eyes filled, and he finished in a broken voice,

"All our efforts were useless, even to recover her body."

I asked what had become of her husband. Leonard indicated the wheeled chair, and said in a low voice,

"I bring my wife on a sad wedding-journey. We came here in the hope of prolonging my poor uncle's days, but in spite of all they are numbered."

He leaned toward me and whispered, "Consumption! Too many suppers, and so on."

I looked at Leonard's shrivelled face, his little slim body, and parted with him, lost in wonder.

The extraordinary tales signed "Q.," which excited so much attention five or six years ago, have long since been rightly attributed to Arthur Quiller Couch, who has thereby gained world-wide fame. Here is a trifle from his pen, but it is marked with the same power which distinguishes his longer work.

THE OUTLANDISH LADIES.

A MILE beyond the fishing village, as you follow the road that climbs inland up the coomb, the two tall hills to right and left diverge to make room for a third, set like a wedge in the throat of the vale. Here the road branches into two, with a sign-post at the angle; and between the sign-post and the gray scarp of the hill there lies an acre of waste ground that the streams have turned into a marsh. This is Loose-heels. Long before I learned the name's meaning, in the days when I trod the lower road with slate and satchel to and from the village school, this spot was a favorite of mine—but chiefly in July, when the monkey-flower was out and the marsh aflame with it.

There was a spell in that yellow blossom with the wicked blood-red spots that held me its mere slave. Also the finest grew in desperate places. So that, day after day, when July came round, my mother would cry shame on my small clothes, and my father take exercise upon them, and all the month I went tingling. They were pledged to "break me of it"; but they never did. Now they are dead, and the flowers—the flowers last always, as Victor Hugo says. When after many years I revisited the valley, the stream had carried the seeds half-a-mile below Loose-heels, and painted its banks with monkey-blossoms all the way. But the finest, I was glad to see, still inhabited the marsh.

Now it is rare to find this plant growing wild, for in fact it is a garden flower. And its history here is connected with a bit of mud wall, ruined and covered with mosses and ragwort, that still pushed up from the swamp

ground when I knew it, and had once been part of a cottage. How a cottage came here, and how its inhabitants entered and went out, are questions past guessing; for the marsh hemmed it in on three sides, and the fourth is slope of hill fit to break your back. But there was the wall, and here is the story.

One morning, near the close of the last century, a small child came running down to the village with news that the cottage, which for ten years had stood empty, was let; there was smoke coming out at the chimney, and an outlandish lady walking in the garden. Being catechised, he added that the lady wore bassomy bows in her cap, and had accosted him in a heathen tongue that caused him to flee incontinently, fearing worse things. This being told, two women, rulers of their homes, sent their husbands up the valley to spy, who found the boy had spoken truth.

Smoke was curling from the chimney, and in the garden the lady was still moving about—a small, yellow creature, with a wrinkled but pleasant face, white curls and piercing black eyes. She wore a black gown, cut low in the neck, a white kerchief, and bassomy (or purplish) bows in her cap, as the child had stated. Just at present she was busy with a spade, and showed an ankle passing neat for her age as she turned up the neglected mold. When the men plucked up gallantry enough to offer their services, she smiled and thanked them in broken English, but said that her small forces would serve.

So they went back to their wives; and their wives, recollecting that the cottage formed part of the glebe, went off to inquire of Parson Morth, "than whom," as the tablet to his memory relates, "none was better to castigate the manners of the age." He was a burly, hard-riding ruffian, and the tale of his great fight with Gypsy Ben in Launceston streets is yet told on the country-side.

Parson Morth wanted to know if he couldn't let his cottage to an invalid lady and her sister without consulting every washmouth in the parish.

"Aw, so there's two!" said one of them, nodding her

head. "But tell us, parson dear, ef 'tes fitty for two unmated women to come trapesing down in a po'shay at dead o' night, when all modest flesh be in their bedgowns."

Upon this the parson's language became not merely violent, but grossly indelicate, after the fashion of those days. He closed his peroration by slamming the front door on his visitors, and they went down the hill "blushing (as they said) all over at his intimate words."

So nothing more was known of the strangers. But it was noticed that Parson Morth, when he passed the cottage on his way to meet or market, would pull up his mare, and if the outlandish lady were working in the garden, would doff his hat respectfully.

"Bon jour, Mamzelle Henriette"—this was all the French the parson knew. And the lady would smile back and answer in English:

"Good morning, Parson Morth."

"And Mamzelle Lucille?"

"Ah, just the same, my God! All the day stare—stare. If you had known her before—so be-eutiful, so gifted, si bien elevée! It is an affliction, but I think she loves the flowers."

And the parson rode on with a lump in his throat.

So two years passed, during which Mademoiselle Henriette tilled her garden and turned it into a paradise. There were white roses on the south wall, and in the beds mignonette and boy's-love, pansies, carnation, gilly-flowers, sweet-williams, and flaming great hollyhocks; above all, the monkey-blossoms that throve so well in the marshy soil. And all that while no one had caught so much as a glimpse of her sister Lucille. Also how they lived was a marvel. The outlandish lady bought neither fish, nor butcher's meat, nor bread. To be sure, the parson sent down a pint of milk every morning from his dairy; the can was left at the garden gate and fetched at noon, when it was always found neatly scrubbed, with the price of the milk inside. Besides, there was a plenty of vegetables in the garden.

But this was not enough to avert the whisper of witchcraft. And one day, when Parson Morth had rid-

den off to the wrestling matches at Exeter, the blow fell.

Farmer Anthony of Carne—great-grandfather of the present farmer—had been losing sheep. Now not a man in the neighborhood would own to having stolen them, so what so easy to suspect as witchcraft? Who so fatally open to suspicion as the two outlandish sisters? Men, wives and children formed a procession.

The month was July; and Mlle. Henriette was out in the garden, a bunch of monkey-flowers in her hand, when they arrived. She turned all white and began to tremble like a leaf. But when the spokesman stated the charge, there was another tale.

"It was an infamy. Steal? She would have them know that she and her sister were of good West Indian family—tres bien elevées." Then followed a torrent of epithets. They were laches—poltroons. Why were they not fighting Bonaparte, instead of sending their wives up to the cliffs dressed in red cloaks to scare him away, while they bullied weak women?

They pushed past her. The cottage held two rooms on the ground floor. In the kitchen, which they searched first, they found only some garden stuff and a few snails salted in a pan. There was a door leading to the inner room, and the foremost had his hand on it when Mlle. Henriette rushed before him and flung herself at his feet. The yellow monkey-blossoms were scattered and trampled on the floor.

"Ah—non, non, messieurs! Je vous prie! Elle est si—si horrible!"

They flung her down and pushed on.

The invalid sister lay in an arm-chair with her back to the doorway, a bunch of monkey-flowers beside her. As they burst in, she started, laid both hands on the arms of her chair and turned her face slowly upon them.

She was a leper.

They gave one look at the featureless face, with the white scales shining upon it, and ran back with their arms lifted before their eyes. One woman screamed. Then a dead stillness fell on the place, and the cottage was empty.

On the following Saturday Parson Morth walked down to the inn, just ten minutes after stalling his mare. He strode into the tap room in his muddy boots, took two men by the neck, knocked their skulls together, and then demanded to hear the truth.

"Very well," he said, on hearing the tale; "to-morrow I march every man Jack of you up to the valley, if it's by the scruff of your necks, and in the presence of both of those ladies—of both, mark you—you shall kneel down and ask them to come to church. I don't care if I empty the building. Your fathers (who were men, not curs) built the south transept for those same poor souls, and cut a slice in the chancel arch through which they might see the host lifted. That's where you sit, Jim Trestrail, church warden; and by the Lord Harry they shall have your pew."

He marched them up the very next morning. He knocked at the door, but no one answered. After waiting a while, he put his shoulder against the door and forced it in.

There was no one in the kitchen. In the inner room one sister sat in the arm-chair. It was Mlle. Henriette, cold and stiff. Her dead hands were stained with earth.

At the back of the cottage they came upon a freshly formed mound, and stuck on the top of it a piece of slate, such as children erect over a thrush's grave. On it was scratched:

Ci-Git
LUCILLE,
Jadis si Belle;
Dont dix-neuf Jeunes Hommes, Planteurs de
SAINT DOMINUE
ont demande la Main.
MAIS ELLE NE VOULAIT PAS.
R. I. P.

This is the story of Loose-heels, otherwise Lucilles.

No one will regret the punishment which befell the unhappy heroine of this tragic story by Georges Ohnet. Its only moral seems to be that the most fortunate should be on their guard lest a sudden frenzy of the same sort seize them also. Miss Mary Cruger has translated the story for ROMANCE.

A TERRIBLE FALL.

IN one of the immense shops which form what is called the Paradis des Dames in Paris, and which contain in their numerous departments every imaginable article of dress or adornment that the soul of woman can desire, a very charming young lady was idly flitting from counter to counter, seeming to be moved more by curiosity than an actual desire to make purchases. Her very simple walking-dress, plain and unpretending as it seemed at first glance, was, nevertheless, made of rich material; and her whole aspect, to an experienced eye, told of cultured intelligence, delicate tastes, and a daily life of utmost luxury.

The young Countess D—— was of Italian birth; and after spending a summer at Trouville, where she had made many delightful Parisian acquaintances, was now established in Paris for the winter, in a charming mansion, where the Count and she were enjoying all the gayeties of the season with true Italian fervor and enthusiasm. They were wealthy enough to gratify the most extravagant tastes; besides which, the Countess' father, who had made an immense fortune in railway speculations, held his purse-strings always unloosed, for his daughter's occasional use.

The Countess, having strolled into the shop in question to make some trifling purchases, had wandered from one section to another, now and then buying some little thing which caught her fancy, as she glanced over the masses of rich and attractive wares, piled along the counters in every direction. A charming array of dainty laces stayed her wandering footsteps, and as she paused

to admire their elaborate beauty, the salesman began eagerly to show them with many descriptive phrases.

One piece of point d'Alençon so delighted the Countess that she stood still, in absorbed silence, while the salesman, comprehending how keenly her fancy was enlisted, displayed it in every possible aspect, holding it up to the light, spreading it over different colored satins, and pointing out the regal magnificence of its texture and design. The Countess was so fascinated that she no longer listened to the salesman's tempting phrases. She fixed her eyes with a very passion of admiration upon the lace, feeling such an intense desire to possess it that she clasped her gloved hands together, as though fearing to touch the prize, which she would not then have known how to relinquish.

The salesman, regarding her silence as an indication that she preferred less expensive laces, now threw on the counter a mass of Valenciennes edgings, extolling their fineness and cheapness as volubly as ever. He had left the point d'Alençon still lying on the counter, and these new goods had half concealed it from view. While still busy unfolding and showing them off, he was called away for a moment. It was truly a very short moment before he returned, but in that flitting instant the unfortunate Countess had yielded to the temptation, the force of which had been so irresistible. She had slipped the lace which she coveted into her sleeve, and was again standing motionless when the salesman returned.

She trembled lest he should again handle the mass of lace on the counter, and so discover his loss; but he only looked impatiently into her colorless, languid countenance, as though concluding that she had no real desire to purchase after all.

The Countess, already frightened at her mad act, thought of throwing the lace back on the counter and pretending that she had wanted to see if he would miss it. But her desire to possess it, now that she actually had it, grew so uncontrollable that to return it was like giving up her very heart's blood. Her brain throbbed with a fever of mingled dread and determination; and

she forced herself to walk carelessly on, while her feet quivered with the impulse to fly from the unknown danger on which she had so resolutely turned her back.

Then a new terror, born of the sudden awakening of her conscience, assailed her. She felt, that, after all, she could not deliberately go out of that shop an actual thief! She half turned to go back to the lace counter to return the lace, and then concluded to drop it on the floor instead. Having done this, with a sigh of relief she moved on; but the voice of another salesman stayed her trembling steps.

"Madame has dropped this!" he said obsequiously, as he picked up the lace, and offered it to her.

"No!" she stammered nervously, "It is not mine!"

"Pardon!" he persisted, "I saw it fall from beneath your cloak."

She looked at him eagerly, imploringly. Her crime faced her now with an overpowering sternness; but she would not sully her integrity by any new departure from its teachings.

People were beginning to look curiously at her, while the salesmen exchanged knowing glances.

"Not here!" she gasped, as the salesman who had picked up the lace began to readjust its folds.

He understood, and without a word, though he grinned maliciously, he led her to a small room near by, which was the inspector's office.

There, overcome now with a bitter sense of what she had done, with tears and entreaties, the Countess confessed the fault she had been so incomprehensibly tempted to commit.

"I know all that!" said the inspector impatiently. "That story is repeated here every day. We lose many thousand francs' worth of goods every year; and if we are not severe with the culprits, we shall be ruined. Who are you, madame? Give me your name and address!"

"Never!" she cried passionately.

"Then I must send for the police!"

"Let me see the proprietor first!" she implored.

"Impossible! M. Bontemps has no time to waste on

such matters. You must either give me your name, or——"

Speechless with pain and grief, the Countess snatched up a pen from the desk before which she was standing, and with the desperation of fear wrote her name on the blank page that lay open on the desk. Seeing the inspector smile incredulously, as he glanced at it, as though he felt sure it was an assumed name she had given, she took out her card-case, and threw one of her cards down, at which he smiled again, and stooping over the open page, wrote above the Countess' signature the words:

"Detected in the act of stealing lace."

The Countess, no longer detained, now fled with hurried steps and fevered brain into the open street, where she stood for an instant, eagerly inhaling the crisp, frosty air and trying to collect her wits again.

Reflection only terrified her the more. She had permitted the inspector to frighten her into this self-betrayal, feeling that she must at all hazards save herself from public exposure. The disgrace, fearful enough for herself, would have utterly crushed the Count. And now, by her own act, she had placed their name, the noble title which had never before known such plebeian stain, at the mercy of the inspector. How could she tell what use he might make of it?

Not far off rolled the icy waters of the Seine; should she drown her shame and remorse beneath its flood? No, the scandal of such an act would only deepen the obloquy that already rested so heavily on her shoulders. One gleam of hope suddenly suggested itself to her half-distracted mind. She had known intimately at Trouville the family of the Baron de Tresorier, whose office was but a few steps away. She knew his wealth, his kindly heart, and his friendliness toward herself; and in a few moments she was with him, telling her sad plight with many tears and entreating his aid in her protection.

"See M. Bontemps!" she cried wildly, as she finished her narration. "Get back that paper at any cost! and I am saved!"

It seemed a desperate hope, but the Baron could not refuse to make the attempt. Leaving the Countess secluded in his inner office, he went at once to see M. Bontemps.

This worthy shop-keeper had a benevolent aspect at first sight, as though he were only awaiting opportunities to bestow kindnesses on all the world; yet at the Baron's first words, he compressed his lips, saying:

"A case of shop-lifting, I see!"

"This lady is ill; she does not understand," began the Baron.

"A shoplifter, however," said M. Bontemps coldly.

"One of your inspectors induced her to sign a paper," continued the Baron.

"That is our custom!—but any favor I can do you, Baron, in the matter, is of course——"

As he spoke, he turned to a ledger on his desk.

"I see here," he went on with twinkling eyes, "that the Countess D—— was detected in an attempt to steal a piece of point d'Alençon lace. A note adds that this person was not of the usual style of shoplifters—that——"

"Enough!" interposed the Baron angrily. "That paper which the Countess was forced to sign must be given up."

"Except to please you, Baron, I would absolutely refuse to do so," returned M. Bontemps suavely. "However, if due amends are made——"

"I expected that!" muttered the Baron. "Well! how much do you demand for it?"

"How much? These people, you say, are rich, and occupy a high position in the world; fifty thousand francs, then——"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Baron.

"Don't misunderstand me!" continued M. Bontemps, "I do not propose to enrich myself by the exaction. The amount shall be divided among the neighboring districts for the use of the poor."

The Baron looked at M. Bontemps in surprise, as he saw that shrewd, rather coarse face take on an almost

noble aspect of benevolence, while he smiled placidly on his visitor.

Without another word he took out his pocketbook, filled out a check on the Bank of France for the amount named and handed it to M. Bontemps, who silently handed to him in return the coveted paper bearing the Countess' signature.

In a very brief space, for he realized the anguished suspense in which she must be awaiting his return, the Baron returned to his office, and placed the fatal paper in her hands.

She snatched it, studying it wildly for an instant, and then tore it into many fragments, which she crushed in her hands before throwing them into the open grate, where a coal fire was burning brightly.

"How can I thank you?" she cried passionately. "It was very good of him to give you the paper!"

"He did not give it!" replied the Baron grimly. "I bought it!"

"You bought it?" she cried, growing fearfully pale. "And how much did he dare to ask for it?"

"Fifty thousand francs."

"Which you have already given him?"

"How else could I save you?" he replied simply.

Confounded and almost crushed by the Baron's generosity, feeling in her heart a mortal wound, a sense of shame and remorse that must ever dwell there in secret, devouring her very life-current with its insidious poison, the Countess stammered some words of confused thanks, and then left him to return to her home. In its bright joyousness she could nevermore find the rest and comfort which had hitherto crowned her days.

The next morning's *Figaro* announced M. Bontemps' munificence in bestowing on the poor of Paris the generous sum of fifty thousand francs. The Baron de Tresorier at once addressed to him this telegram:

"Monsieur, you have taken the credit to yourself of bestowing on the poor fifty thousand francs which belonged to me. If you do not send me by noon a receipt, showing the anonymous bestowal of a similar sum from your own resources, the journals of to-

morrow will contain the whole story of our transaction."

M. Bontemps at once replied:

"If you tell the story, I will name the lady."

To which the Baron returned:

"Then I will pull your ears before your whole establishment."

That was the end of it. The poor got the additional benefaction, and no more was said about it by any one.

A week later, the Countess returned to Italy for a short visit to her parents; and in a few days she sent to Baron de Tresorier, with a note of renewed thanks, a check for the fifty thousand francs, the lending of which at that critical moment had saved her from such bitter shame.

Not long afterward, the Count also wrote to the Baron, telling him of his young wife's tragic death. Ever since their return from Paris, she had been, he said, in evident grief and surprise, always melancholy. While her health seemed fairly good, her mind was oppressed with some secret trouble, the weight of which increased day by day, in spite of all his tender ministrations. At length, on the occasion of an excursion to the island of Capri, she had wandered off by herself among the rocks, at the foot of which they found her, a little later, with a smile on her dead face. They believed it an accident, but with that ever-gnawing burden of remorse in her heart, may she not have found life no longer endurable?

Ghosts, as is well known, have a special distaste for dogs. It will be seen that poor "Zamba" in this famous tale from *London Society*, by Elwyn Keith, suffered for this universal prejudice. However, the "Voice" supplies an element of humor which greatly modifies the horrors of the situation.

WHY NEW HOUSES ARE HAUNTED.

I MADE an interesting acquaintance the other day. He sat on my right hand at dinner, and judging by appearances, he might have been a person of note as well as not. He spoke in German, rapidly, with a precision very much to the point—being one of those large-browed, bright-eyed individuals who can distinguish between masks and faces at a glance, and give a pretty accurate guess as to the kind of soul behind either. His under lip was deeply indented, so that, when smiling, his mouth assumed the same triangular form that characterized Heine, though his humor, while leaning toward sarcasm, was never bitter.

"I saw an old friend to-day," he said, suddenly, turning from his wife to me, and throwing one arm comfortably over the back of his chair; "I met him, first, this summer in the Engadine."

"You were glad to meet him again, then," said I.

"Most uncommonly glad," he answered, shaking his head emphatically. "Though I never spoke three words to him in my life, yet I can say, with all my heart, that it gives me exceeding joy to see him again. It is impossible to be bored where he is!"

"Are *you* ever bored?" I asked.

"I?" he returned, heartily. "Not I, thank God! I am proud to say, I have never been bored a single hour in my life. I see other people wearying themselves; but, while their folly and my own remain to laugh at, *ennui* stays far from me. If it came near, the recollection of my Engadine friend would banish it at once. I will describe him. You will, then, know him forever,

for there cannot be his like on earth. Two such prodigies would be greater bounty on the part of Nature than we poor mortals dare expect. He is about the middle height, has gray hair and a voice like far-off thunder. I should say, rather, a voice lost in a cellar, that rolls and rolls through wine-filled vaults, seeking an outlet in vain. His nose is a color-study for painters; yes, on my word, a real color-study. It is of good size, and has every variety of shade, ranging through purple, red and blue. It is a marvel! In the Summer this gentleman walked about, attended by two young servant-maids, both strong and healthy, and both crowned with red silk handkerchiefs. These carried his walking-stick and painting apparatus—for he is an artist, of course, and paints wonderful pictures, all green and blue, as unlike nature as anything is possible to be. They also provide him amusement when he is fatigued."

Here the three-cornered smile appeared and deepened on my neighbor's face.

"The amusements are as original as the man," he continued, chuckling. "They consist of athletic exhibitions. He makes his girls fetch and carry like dogs, or jump over stones, or across a stick which he holds out; sometimes he joins in the sport himself, vaulting over tables and chairs at wayside inns until fatigue stops him; then, the maids carry on the fun by themselves."

"He must be mad!" I cried, indignantly.

"He is English," replied my informant demurely, but with twinkling eyes. "He was born in Italy, I believe, and owns a restaurant near some great town. This he rents, however, and spends the income most joyously, as I can testify."

"Does he walk about here with two maids?" I asked.

"No," replied the German. "He left them in the Engadine. But you will not need them as a mark of recognition. The color-study will be sufficient. It is a real master-piece; an astonishing combination of inharmonious shades."

As a natural result, I looked out eagerly for this old gentleman, but for some days in vain. My German friend departed, and his story was well-nigh forgotten,

when it was brought to mind one night, toward the end of *table-d'hôte*, by a Voice—I spell it advisedly with a capital—such as I had never conceived possible from man.

It reverberated solemnly through the *salle-à-manger* like the deepest organ-note; nor did it seem to come from any person present, but from a vast cavern underground, some huge, mysterious void inhabited by ghosts and ghouls. And the Voice said:—

"No, I would not insure *all* effervescing drinks. Not soda-water, for instance!"

As the contrast between the tone and the words themselves was supremely ludicrous, a burst of general laughter followed, which rose louder and louder, as one after another caught the infection, and first tittered because his neighbor roared, then roared because he could not help himself. Peal succeeded peal till the room rang, and as the last died away, the Voice spoke again from Hades, reflectively and slowly:—

"Or ginger-beer!"

And instantly the senseless merriment broke out afresh. I speculated on the force of influences, laughing the while myself as heartily as anyone; and, as I speculated, the German's description of his Engadine acquaintance came back to me, and I leaned forward to see the originator of the excess. He was pouring out a tumbler of Chianti, thoughtfully, from a flask, and a shadow of the crimson liquid was cast upon the bluer portions of that famous color-study for painters, which ranged through purple and red.

The Master of Maidens looked up from his occupation.

"Sir," said he, and the marvellous Voice rumbled and echoed above the tumult of many tongues, "that won't do! You make a great mistake. If you were to pull down a haunted house twenty times over, and rebuild it in a different locality each time—if you were to divide it into twenty cottages, it would remain haunted to the end. I know, Mr. Barrister, from bitter experience."

"Tell us all about it, Mr. Brace," suggested the gen-

tleman addressed, who acted as president at his end of the table.

"Oh, yes; I dare say! Tell you all about it! Sir, I am a man with a conscience!"

"We don't doubt it in the least," said the barrister.

"With a heavy conscience, a restless conscience, a conscience that will never allow itself sleep, or me a moment's peace!" moaned the Voice.

"Confession is good for the soul, sir," remarked an American.

"Eh?"—the monosyllable was very doleful. "With you as Father Confessor? I doubt it, sir, I doubt it. You're too young and too—good-looking!"

And again the chorus of senseless merriment rose to a shriek and gradually died away. Then the Voice was heard, gallant in a ghostly fashion that made my flesh creep.

"Why not, madam?" it rolled. "Why not? Ladies must be obeyed under all circumstances whatsoever. Certainly, I will tell my misfortune, if you care to listen:—

"When I came of age, I inherited two houses from my father, the rents of which were to be my income, as they had been his. One, luckily, is profitable, rising in value; the other is a never-ceasing source of trouble. I say 'is' for, though long since passed out of my hands, thank God, it plagues and bothers its present owners as it plagued and bothered me; which is saying a great deal.

"I am not going to tell you where this house was originally built; that has nothing to do with the question. It might have been in Russia quite as well as in Japan or Mexico. What happens in one country at one time may happen in another country at another time, and the explanation of either will account for both, provided the causes of both are identical. That's logic, Mr. Barrister, ain't it?"

"Just so," said the barrister superciliously. "Was your father a solicitor, Mr. Brace?"

"He was," growled the Voice. "And can *you* tell me, sir, the difference between a solicitor and a barrister?"

"No, I can't," drawled the president.

"The same difference as between a crocodile and an alligator!" roared the Voice angrily; and as a laugh turned against his victim, Mr. Brace poured out another tumbler of Chianti and drank it off at a draught.

"Well, madam," he continued, more gently, "this second house had come into my father's hands in the way of business. When his clients could not pay their fees in cash, he was sometimes willing to accept their dwellings instead. 'Buildings pay ten per cent, and are a safe investment,' he used to say. I wish to goodness he had not been quite so sure; I'd have been so much the richer then. But, as he did not consult me, I knew nothing about the transaction until after his death, when the will was read. I first set eyes on the abominable swindle when I went to inspect the premises.

"I found a square, solemn edifice, overgrown with ivy, standing in the middle of a few acres of pleasure-ground which had been utterly neglected for years. High brick walls divided the property from the rest of the world; within them, you might fancy yourself the first or last man, according to your mood, so complete was the sense of isolation. Foreign trees, rare shrubs, stumps of weather-stained statues, moss-grown fountains and grass-grown walks, were sorrowfully suggestive of by-gone grandeur. Indoors it was much the same; echoing corridors, crooked staircases, unexpected rooms with painted ceilings in unexpected places, approached by unexpected ways. Upon my word, I felt odd as I tramped through them!

"'Ugh!' I exclaimed at last, to the Care-taker, 'the house might be haunted!'

"'It *is* haunted, sir,' she replied, quietly. 'But I'm used to it. Nothing will hurt me if I keep away from the Red Room after dark.'

"'Ah! the Red Room!' said I, looking at her (she was an old scarecrow); 'and which may that be?'

"She brought me into a large, bare apartment on the ground floor, where spiders had made themselves a paradise of dust and web. There was a long mirror oppo-

site the fireplace, and the room was lighted by French windows opening on to a terrace, that ended on one side at the gravel sweep before the entrance, on the other at a wall, and an iron door admitting into the fruit-garden. A dismal row of terra-cotta vases ornamented the farther edge of the walk, and a broken set of steps led down to a lawn, where the grass had grown rank round a deep basin of stagnant water. The lawn itself was bounded by a thick row of laurels that hid the ivied outer walls. No one could cross the grass without leaving tracks as in a meadow; no one could enter or leave by the iron door, because it was locked and the key in my possession; and, I suddenly determined, no one should escape by the great gate under the archway, through which I had driven in, for I would lock it, and keep that key too, while I slept, or kept watch, in the Red Room that very night.

"The old woman turned pale when I told her my intention, which confirmed my resolve. How could I let a haunted house, unless I proved the tales were groundless? And how could I prove them, except by experience? And the best way of assuring myself a good night's rest was by giving rogues no time for preparation. I would not allow the hag to say a word. 'For,' said I, 'I know nothing about the house or its antecedents; therefore imagination can scarcely run away with me; at all events, if it does, it will be in a new line.' Accordingly, I bade her rig up a bed near the fireplace, to avoid the reflection of the mirror, and clear the spiders out, collect chairs and tables from the other rooms, and light a roaring fire to make the place more comfortable, while I drove back to town for provisions, candles, etc., and to fetch my pistols and my dog.

"Zamba was of Danish breed, slate-colored, and fierce to everyone but me. She loved me, poor, unfortunate brute, as well as a woman might have done, and she disposed of her rivals more effectually. We were both in high spirits when I returned with her about sunset. I sent the trap away, and, having locked the gates, instituted, with Zamba's aid, a thorough search of the premises outside and in. I knew nothing could escape

her prying nose. She was amazingly curious; she examined every hole and corner of the grounds, tracking the rank grass near the pool in every direction. But she found nothing. Indoors it was the same; there was a lot of dust, but besides, not even a rat (except the housekeeper) in that accursed house from garret to cellar.

"I forgot to say, the weather was fine and clear for the time of year. The moon, too, was luckily at the full and would shine on the terrace a good part of the night. Nature herself seemed inclined to aid me.

"When Zamba and I had finished our rounds, I took her into the Red Room. Here, she was not quite so satisfied. She sniffed the air doubtfully once or twice, and looked inquiringly into my face; then she walked slowly to the window, looked out, came back to me, wagging her tail uncertainly, as if to ask,—'Is it all right?' Her doubts were quelled for the moment when I reassured her by voice and caresses, and she stretched herself at full length on the hearth before the now blazing fire.

"The twilight was deepening, and the old woman, whom I had called to help in unpacking the stores, asked permission to go away. I told her to light two duplex lamps first, and place them in the two darkest corners of the room. She grinned approval of the precaution, but as, having obeyed me, she was about to vanish into cannier regions, she paused with the door-handle in her hand and said in a rapid whisper:—

"'All the lamps and candles here,' she eyed the four I had ranged on the supper-table, 'in the world won't help you, sir, if you haven't plenty of matches. There's another box, sir, *and don't let it lie on the table!*'

"The door slammed behind her; next moment it opened again and she said:—

"'But that won't help you either, for no one ever came out of this room alive after a night spent in it—*and no one ever will!*'

"She was gone. I picked up the matches from the floor, where she had flung them, and blessed her for her forethought, for I had forgotten to bring any

with me, and as I put them into my pocket, Zamba whined.

"'What's the matter, old girl?' I asked. 'You and I are going to have grand fun to-night, ain't we?'

"But she heaved a deep sigh, and put her nose between her paws.

"Between eating, feeding Zamba, reading and smoking, time passed pretty quickly until ten o'clock. Then, looking up, I saw the full moon shining in at the long French windows. I thought I should like to stroll on the terrace, and, calling Zamba, I lit a fresh cigar and went out into the open air.

"Not a leaf was stirring; the moonlight fell on the dew-drops hanging on the long, limp blades of grass, so that each bead resembled a pearl, so pure, so soft was their radiance. Not a grasshopper, not a frog broke the stillness with chirp or croak. I never felt a stillness so intensely in my life; yet it was not oppressive, it was like falling asleep—a sweet, luxurious sense of repose. Even Zamba fell under the influence, and walked quietly beside me, sometimes thrusting her nozzle into my hand courting caresses, or touching my fingers lightly with her tongue.

"I don't know how long we had been pacing the walk in this fashion, when Zamba cocked her ears.

"'What is it?' I asked her, gently. She glanced quickly into my face and wagged her tail, then put her ears back and whined. I listened anxiously.

"And, presently, a full, sweet, woman's voice began to sing—to vocalize. It seemed to come from the sweep before the door. There was nothing odd about it, nothing unusual. I thought a vagrant artist was singing on the chance of gaining pence, but that her voice was superior to most of her class—in fact, I never heard a better on any stage. Sometimes the sound came nearer, sometimes it drifted farther off, as if the songstress were moving up and down before the house, to see if, at any window, there were signs of life. No words were distinguishable in the song; runs, trills, and sorrowful single notes of exceeding beauty followed one another, melodiously indeed, but with no regard to order

—at least, I have not known a composition approaching that in structure. It carried me away. I listened and listened, till my cigar went out, and listened still to the enchanting strains, now rising, now falling, as I imagined the woman approached or retired from the terrace. Suddenly it ceased.

"'Poor thing,' I said aloud, awaking as from a dream. 'We must give her some food and see what can be done for her. Come along, Zamba!'

"Zamba crawled after me. I remembered her reluctance next day. As I came into the Red Room, I looked about for some fowl and half a loaf of bread I had left from supper; and, as I stooped to pile the food together, the song burst out again; but this time, as if the singer stood on the terrace, almost in the room.

"I did not turn at once, for the chicken would not balance on the loaf; when I did turn, the song had ceased, and, to my utter amazement, there was no one near the open window.

"'Hullo!' I said, 'that's odd!'

"Going to the threshold, I saw that the terrace was deserted; then, for the first time, it dawned upon me that the great gates were locked, the keys in my possession, and that no living being could enter the precincts without my knowledge! Calling to Zamba, I ran out, intending to search the garden and shrubbery with her. She obeyed reluctantly; when I urged her forward, she gazed piteously into my face and whined; and on my persisting, she rose on her hind-legs and placed her forepaws on my breast. Poor brute! After that, we went back to the Red Room no wiser than we had left it. I looked at my watch as we came in. It was twenty minutes past twelve.

"Sitting in the arm-chair, I piled fresh logs on the fire. Zamba took up her old position on the rug, with her nose between her paws, and watched the window suspiciously. About ten minutes later, one of the duplex lamps went out, and Zamba rose slowly, growling angrily. The next instant, the other lamp went out, and the dog, barking furiously, flew at Something which was coming in from the terrace. I saw the animal

spring into the air about the height a man's throat would be from the ground. I saw nothing between me and the outer air except Zamba; the moonlight streamed full across the rank grass, the stagnant pool and the terrace, and no shadow intercepted its path to me. But Zamba certainly attacked something, and, as certainly, her body was immediately flung violently backward so that she fell at my feet, dead, her neck hideously twisted and broken.

"I seized my pistols and fired at nothing. One of the four candles on the table was put out. Remembering the old woman's warning, I laid one revolver down and tried to light the candle from another. Then, in the mirror opposite, for the first time, I perceived Something. It was a Hand, pale and sinewy; it seized the revolver and carried it away. Another candle went out.

"'This is getting serious!' I said to myself, and I stuck the second pistol into my coat-pocket, that I might relight the candles at once. The others went out. I lighted them again. Once more two were extinguished; the second revolver was snatched from my pocket. The third candle went out. I snatched out the matches and lighted it; the other was extinguished. I relighted it, and so the game went on; as fast as one candle went out, I struck a match and lit it again, and so on, *da capo*. I observed, too, that other Hands had joined that pale one, hovering and circling in the air, now vanishing, now appearing, and, repeated in the mirror, their number seemed countless. I was too excited to care much about them, as they had not as yet come very near me; but the thought did occur: 'How shall I keep them at bay when the matches are exhausted? Will they strangle me in the dark?' My foot touched poor Zamba's body, and a cold chill ran over me; for, at the same time, I perceived the Hands closer to me than ever before; and their shadowy fingers had a cruel, gripping expression that didn't please me. I did not relish their proximity at all. The match-box was now nearly empty.

"'Come!' said I, aloud and firmly, 'I am going to stay here all night, and walk out of this room *alive* in the

morning. Matches or no matches; candles or no candles; Hands or no Hands!'

"I sat down and lighted another candle. Presently the logs on the hearth fell apart. I kicked them together with some difficulty, for striking matches takes up a good deal of attention, and, notwithstanding my danger, the humor of the situation tickled me. Surely, a more ridiculous night's work could hardly be imagined, than that of lighting candles for ghosts to snuff out! If poor Zamba's body, with its twisted neck, had not proved that a terrible reality underlay the apparent comedy, I could have laughed outright, but—*only three matches remained to strike!*

"'I *will* stay here all night!' I repeated doggedly. 'Light or no light; Hands or no Hands!'

"My assailants increased in number; the room was full of them, from floor to ceiling, all pale and cruel, all shadowy and indistinct, yet they did not touch me. I wondered at that—wondered what hindered them from strangling me at once, as they had my dog, when I struck the last match, and saw the last candle extinguished. I kicked the logs on the hearth; a shower of sparks flew into the air, and I was left in complete darkness, hemmed in by those horrid, pallid Hands. That was an awful moment, but my blood was up.

"'I stay HERE!' I cried furiously. 'Hands or no Hands; matches or no matches; candles or no candles; and I WILL walk out of this room alive in the morning!'

"The Things paused in their advance. Only for a second, however; the next, they were circling and hovering, making horrid dives at me, like a flock of hellish birds hungering to pick my bones. Still I was not daunted. Having observed that my enemies advanced as my courage failed, and fled when I was bold, I concluded that my will preserved me, and that, should it fail or falter, Zamba's fate would surely be mine. Accordingly I resisted every impulse of fear. Leaning back in my chair, I waited for the morning, and thought the dawn would never break. Sometimes drops of exhaustion and nervous apprehension stood on my forehead, as imagination pictured those cruel, fleshless

Hands behind me, their long, pale fingers, perhaps, in the act of clasping round my throat; and at such moments, the Things thronged thicker, faster toward me, till checked by my strong determination. Half a lifetime seemed crowded into those few hours.

"At last, as my strength was giving way and hope failing, a gray look came into the sky; a slow, soft breeze stole through the trees in the shrubbery, and a cock crew. The pale Hands swept toward me in angry crowds—I gave myself up for lost—they disappeared!"

The Voice paused. We waited in breathless silence.

"The shock of relief was too great for me, madam. I must have fainted; for, when I became conscious, the dawn had fully broken. I was lying on the floor across poor Zamba, and my old hag of a housekeeper was peeping in at the open window.

"She screamed when she saw me get up—the old goose!—but, to do her justice, she was glad enough to find me alive. She brought me tea—I preferred brandy—to make me more comfortable; but she could do nothing for Zamba. Poor Zamba!"

Mr. Brace stretched out his hand for the Chianti, and as he poured out the last glass, he continued:

"Now, madam, this is how my conscience became burdened. On inquiry, I found that *every* room in the house was haunted by different kinds of apparitions; and so were the walks in the grounds. The voice I had heard singing was the pleasantest and most harmless of the whole lot. I could not stand that, you know. One spook might be put up with, but fifty or sixty—no, thank you! I sold my inheritance to a contractor, on condition he pull it down. He, in his turn, sold the stones and bricks to a builder, who ran up a row of neat two-storied villas near a manufacturing town, using them as material. They let splendidly the first year, not so well the second, worse the third, and NOT AT ALL THE FOURTH. *For the whole lot, madam, are haunted. The pale Hands and all the ghosts in my big ghost-shop are now carrying on their nightly games in the respective villas where the stones and bricks of their respective homes were used*

up. Except the songstress; she sings up and down the road, instead of up and down my terrace."

"But how is your conscience troubled?" asked the lady.

"It is naturally tender," moaned the Voice. "It cannot bear the thought of having, unintentionally, been the originator of so much misery in the world as must be caused by letting loose so many apparitions. Hence it gives me no rest."

"Then you believe, Mr. Brace, that the ghosts went with the brick," said the barrister.

"Sure of it," replied the Voice, sorrowfully. "And more; every place built with old material is likely to be haunted, for what do contractors care where their bricks come from, so long as they are cheap? That's how we hear of unaccountable ghosts in brand new villas, and why so many of them are dangerous. They don't like being disturbed, you see."

"Very curious!" said the barrister, musingly.

"I *think* I've heard about the Hands before," remarked the American. "Were you ever in Russia, Mr. Brace?"

"Sir," growled the Voice, "you are an uncommonly sharp young man—a credit to your nation, sir. But, tell me first, why you are not a donkey's tail."

"Why I am not a donkey's tail," repeated the American. "Can't say, I'm sure. Because he ain't my brother?"

"Because you are no end of an ass, sir!" thundered the Voice; and the old gentleman pushed back his chair from the table, and left the *salle-à-manger.*

Tales of the mining-camps in the early days are always interesting. This is especially true of "A Christmas Underground," which has been written for ROMANCE by Louis De Lestry.

A CHRISTMAS UNDERGROUND.

"THE most memorable Christmas in my recollection? Yes, sir. Well, there are many memorable occasions in the life of a mountain pioneer, but this one is worth recording."

The old prospector, declining the proffered Havana, proceeded to fill his pipe with considerable deliberation, as he settled down on a huge boulder. The crisp, bright air of a beautiful October morning lent additional vigor and energy to every faculty.

I took a survey of the old man before he proceeded with his story.

Grizzled hair and beard, and a slight stoop of the shoulders, bespoke years of toil and expectation,—expectation unfulfilled but ever fresh with each recurring spring.

Little does humanity estimate the debts it owes these hardy pioneers, who have led the way across steep and dangerous trails, delving constantly beneath the soil, to open to the world its treasure-vaults. Onward they go, as civilization follows, to still more unexplored regions, until the very heart of the Sierras is like an open book. And when the last pick is struck, when life's fuse has burned itself out, a stone pile perchance marks the last resting-place of a hero, whose kind is now almost extinct.

The old man continued: "You see, just before the Carbonate excitement broke out, I was a clerk in a supply store at Denver. While wages were tolerably fair even for the West, it was slow progress toward getting rich—too slow, in fact, when one could hear every day as how the boys were making rich strikes and selling out their claims at a big figure.

"That spring a young fellow had come out from the States and gone to work in the store. He was a very

quiet sort of a fellow,—had little to say to anyone and was a good worker. But there was something on his mind. A blind man could have noticed it, because he would stop sometimes in the middle of his work, and get to thinking and studying. He was a little more communicative toward me than the rest.

"One night, after supper, my strange friend—let us call him Jim—had taken a stroll up town. About nine o'clock he came rushing in with a copy of the local paper in his hand. His face was flushed and his manner excited.

"'That settles it, Bill, I'm off for the new district. Just read here what strikes have been made out there this past week. Better pack your traps and come along.'

"Well, I read the news, and the fever struck me, too. The rush was fairly on, and in two days' time we had fitted out and were among a large cavalcade that was striking out for the new Carbonate camp." (The old man referred to Leadville.) "We reached the camp, staked out a claim and set to work with a will. We struck a fairly good lead and decided to follow it up.

"There are many pleasant features to a prospector's life, and there are also the shady sides. We lived in a tent on our claim, cooked our own meals and washed our own clothes. The camp itself was about as wild a place as it has been my fortune to see before or since. All the elements of a frontier mining-camp were thoroughly represented.

"We did not frequent the place much, but put in our spare time in building a board-and-log shanty, preparing for the coming winter. Jim worked away with a vengeance. He seemed to be almost in a state of fever. Our prospect was getting better as time advanced and we became reasonably sure of some returns, sooner or later. Winter set in early in the mountains, and as the days grew shorter, our hours of labor were cut down.

"It was just a few days before Christmas. An unusually heavy snow had fallen, and it was bitter cold. So we decided to let the mine take care of itself that day and remain near the warm fire.

"I had long wanted to know something about my

companion. But it was ever the rule among us western men not to ask questions, but wait for exchanges of confidence, which invariably came in good time. I broke the silence by telling Jim the story of my haphazard life.

"He finally gave me a few items from his own, and I learned that the chief object of his stay in the West was to acquire a fortune, if possible, in order to marry a young lady in the East, who from a financial point of view was a little above his station. Unfortunately for him and his friends, I failed to learn his name and the place he called home.

"The day before Christmas the weather broke (moderated) and we went to the mine to put in a good day's work. We had now quite a shaft down, with a cross-cut about twenty feet long, which we had lately started for exploring purposes. We worked in the latter that day, and soon encountered a formation different from anything we had so far discovered. The earth was now soft, and great caution had to be exercised in working, to avoid a cave-in, which would have meant death to both of us.

"As if the same thought had moved us both, we took out of our pockets the extra candles we had brought along, and started to examine the material in which we were working.

"To be sure, we were not mistaken, we had opened an immense pocket of silver-gold carbonates. The end of our tribulations was at hand, and visions of comfort and wealth floated before our eyes.

"I turned around to offer my congratulations to my partner and held out my hand. A bright bit of steel was gleaming in my face, and Jim stood before me with the look of a maniac in his eyes, and a drawn six-shooter in his hands.

"He found his voice after an effort. 'At last,' he said, 'the wealth I've searched for is within my grasp. Bill, you don't need it. You shall not leave this place alive unless you agree and promise to let me have this mine and the proceeds. It is all mine; I brought you here, and now I want it.'

"What could I do? Argument was useless. I was unarmed, and cared little anyhow to take the poor fellow's life. The sudden good fortune had turned his brain. Jim was a raving maniac. But how could I circumvent his plan to murder me?

"I talked to him for a long time, trying to show him the injustice of his act, but the weapon was always levelled at my head, while he demanded a deed to the claim. The prospect was not flattering. I asked him to come to the cabin or to the camp and have the papers made out, but he uttered a diabolical laugh and declined to go. For several hours we argued back and forth, deep underground, with no light save that from our candles. The situation became desperate. The candles would soon give out, and then in the darkness a tragedy might take place. I did not care to be murdered in cold blood by this maniac. Whatever transpired must come quickly, and I decided to disarm the fellow. It was a risky thing, but absolutely the only way out of the dilemma.

"I picked up the bucket rope that was lying at my feet and, toying with it carelessly, kept talking to the lunatic. Measuring the distance between us with a glance, I leaped suddenly upon him, carrying him down by my own weight. The revolver exploded, but only inflicted a flesh-wound in my left arm.

"Then ensued the most desperate struggle in which I was ever engaged. Jim fought with the desperation and superhuman strength usually developed by maniacs. For over an hour we struggled back and forth. I had no desire to injure the fellow, only to secure him. Finally his strength gave way, and I soon had him bound hand and foot. He cursed and begged, all to no purpose. I hurried to the camp for assistance to convey Jim from the bottom of the mine to a place of safety.

"The stars were commencing to peep through the clouds, and just as we entered the one long street of the camp, the cold winter moon rose over the mountain, shedding a pale light over the slowly moving procession. What a home-coming for Christmas Eve!

"Would he ever recover enough to tell us of the names of his friends? I told the boys the story, and

many a rough face was turned away, as its owner no doubt was thinking of the friends at home.

"Jim had to be taken to the asylum. I sold the claim at a good figure, and stayed around to give him all possible aid. But he never regained his sound senses, and died soon after with the secret of his life buried in his breast."

Tennyson's touching poem of "My Wife and I," who "fell out" while passing through the field of corn, is recalled by this story by François Coppée, translated for ROMANCE by J. Mathewman.

FORGIVENESS.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

In the house, a big hive of work-people, situated in the *rue* Delambre, where for six months Tony Robec had occupied a room, every one thought that he was a widower. He could not have been a widower very long, for his little boy, Adrien, who lived with him, and who was always well-cared for, was not more than six years old. Yet neither of them wore mourning.

Early every day, Tony Robec, who was employed as a compositor in a printing-house in the Quartier Latin, left his room, with the child still half-asleep on his shoulder. He left the little one at school, and called for him again at night, when returning from work. Then they went shopping together, after which they shut themselves up in their garret, and nothing more was seen of them until the following morning.

The kind-hearted gossips were full of pity for the poor fellow. He couldn't be more than forty, and was still good-looking, although sad and pale, and with silver streaks in his black beard. Behind his back they said: "That man ought to marry again."

They wished to make his acquaintance. Generally this is not difficult in such a house, where the tenants live with open doors. But Tony had a very reserved manner, and bowed so distantly and coldly—although politely—to his neighbors, when he met them on the stairs, that they were afraid to approach him.

"No, ladies," said the door-keeper, who was inclined to be sentimental, "that widower will never marry again, mark my words. The other Sunday I passed him in the cemetery at Montparnasse. His wife is

doubtless buried there. It cut me to the heart to see the poor man with the motherless little chap at his side. He must have doted on his wife."

Certainly Tony had been very devoted to his wife, and would not be consoled now that he had lost her—but he was not a widower.

His life had been simple, but not by any means happy. Although a conscientious workman, he was not particularly good at his trade, and therefore until he was thirty he had not succeeded in making a tolerably good living, and could not think of marrying. When he did resolve to marry, he ought to have chosen a sensible, economical wife, who had known want as he had. But love does not occupy itself with such trifles. Tony lost his head over a pretty, light-minded, light-hearted flower-girl of nineteen, honest doubtless, but frivolous, and thinking more of her toilet than of anything else under the sun. It must be admitted, however, that she could make a dress out of a few scraps of stuff.

He had saved a little money with which to start housekeeping. Among other things he bought a big cupboard with a glass door, in which his wife could admire herself the whole day.

They were married, and at first lived very happily. They had two modest rooms on the fifth floor of a house in the Boulevard de Port Royal, with a little balcony from which they had a bird's-eye view of Paris. Every night, on leaving work, Tony Robec disguised his workman's clothes under a smart overcoat, and waited for his wife, who presently appeared from her little booth in the *rue* Saint-Honoré, and arm-in-arm they returned to their humble home.

At last a son was born, and was put out to nurse. The parents went to see him once a fortnight. But at the end of a year the child died of convulsions. The parents were, however, soon afterward consoled by the birth of little Adrien. Having had such a sad experience, Clementine resolved to bring up the child herself, and gave up her little shop in order to be able to attend to her baby. She took in work, but did not make more than half of what she had previously earned.

Nevertheless, she continued to dress well. In vain did Tony work desperately; the household became embarrassed and steeped in debt. When the child was weaned, he was sent out during the day to a children's asylum, and the mother, often unoccupied, became tired of her inactivity. Just think of her poor husband, old before his time, worn out with working for and worrying about his giddy, pretty wife of twenty-three!

One evening, when Tony entered the house with the child whom he had picked up at the asylum as he had passed, he found an envelope on the mantelpiece, from which, when he opened it, fell Clementine's wedding-ring. In the letter she bade good-by to her husband and child, and begged their forgiveness.

The unfaithful wife fled in the beginning of May. At the end of July Tony sold the greater part of his furniture in order to pay his debts, and moved into the *rue* Delambre.

Toward the end of September he received a letter from his wife—four incoherent and desperate pages, plentifully washed with tears—in which she announced that she had repented and implored pardon. This was all very painful for Tony, but he was proud, and the letter remained unanswered.

He heard no more from Clementine. On Christmas Eve he went, as was his custom, to the cemetery at Montparnasse, there to place on the grave of his dead child a few frozen violets and roses. For the first time Tony went alone with the child, and, strange as it may seem, on entering the cemetery he suffered more poignantly than ever before from the absence of that wife who had so cruelly deceived him. "Where is she now, and what is she doing?" thought he.

On arriving at the grave, he started, for at the foot of it were strewn several little playthings such as the poor give to their children—a trumpet, a jack-in-the-box, and a whistle. They had evidently just been placed there, for they were quite new.

"Oh, what pretty playthings!" cried little Adrien excitedly. But his father, having detected a scrap of paper pinned to one of the toys, opened it and read: "For

Adrien, from his brother Felix, who is now with the child Christ."

Suddenly he found the boy pressing against him, and murmuring, "Mamma." There, only a few paces away, under a clump of cypress trees, knelt the mother. She was clad in a wretched dress and a thin shawl. Her eyes were sunken, and her cheeks hollow and pale. She was looking at her husband, and her clasped hands were stretched toward him in supplication. Tony pushed the boy gently toward her, saying, "Adrien, go kiss your mother."

The poor creature strained the child convulsively to her breast, and covered him with kisses. Then rising and turning toward her husband, but always with the air of a suppliant, she said, "How good of you!"

But he, already at her side, said huskily, almost harshly, "Don't talk. Take my arm."

It is not far from the cemetery to the *rue* Delambre, and they walked quickly, and without uttering a word. The child, engrossed in his newly-found treasure, trotted along at their side, thinking only of his toys.

When they reached the house, the door-keeper was standing on the steps.

"Madame," said Tony to her, "this is my wife. She has been six months in the country with her mother who was ill, and now she has come back to live with me."

When they reached the room, Tony made his wife sit down in the only arm-chair, placed the boy in her lap, and opened a drawer from which he took an old cardboard box. Out of this he took the wedding-ring, which he pressed on his wife's finger. Then, without a word of reproach or bitterness about the sorrowful past, silently, gravely, with the overflowing generosity of a simple, childlike heart, he gently pressed his lips to her forehead as the seal of his forgiveness.

This legend of the Christmas rose, from the pen of an unknown French writer, will remind many readers of the story of the good St. Elizabeth. It has been translated for ROMANCE by Eliza Lutley Boucher.

THE CHRISTMAS ROSE.

IT was a stormy Christmas Eve, and the little town of Tromsöe was completely enveloped in the ermine mantle of mid-winter. Snow had been falling all day, and as the night approached, large flakes were still being driven hither and thither by the furious wind, which howled and roared in the chimneys, shook the carefully closed windows, and died away in the distance like the last despairing wail of a lost soul.

In one of the most miserable houses of a wretched street, in the worst quarter of the town, a woman by the dim light of a flickering candle watched beside the sick-bed of her last remaining child. She was weeping bitterly, but strove to stifle her sobs for fear of disturbing the fitful slumbers of the sufferer. As the furious tempest shook the dilapidated tenement, she trembled as if she already felt the dread presence of the Angel of Death. No Christmas fagot blazed on the miserable hearth, the happy voices of laughing children and kind friends had for her long been stilled, and the cold, sorrow, and poverty which reigned within seemed but a counterpart of the desolation without. Behind the lowered curtains of the bed could be heard from time to time the short cough and labored breathing of the child, who at last, suddenly awaking, raised herself on her elbow, and looked across the room, where, as in a vision, she again beheld the Christmas trees of her earlier years, with their accompaniments of tapers, bon-bons, toys and golden stars, gleaming amid the darkness of that sombre room. She was a young girl of twelve or fourteen years of age, and the sweet, pale face, although in the last stage of emaciation, still retained traces of delicate youthful beauty.

With her dying voice she still continued to talk of the fête-days of long ago, when she was a rosy, healthy little child, and her brothers and sisters Eric, John, Anton, Hilda and Bertha, crowded around her with their pretty Christmas offerings; when her father danced her on his knee, and her mother sang sweet lullabys by her cradle. Those days seemed far away. Eric and her father had perished in a shipwreck; then, one by one, the others had followed, till death had left behind only the grim sisters, sickness and misery, as the sole companions of the widow and her child.

The vivid remembrance of past happiness had brought a strange light into Greta's eyes, and soon these childish reminiscences gave place to hope. She spoke of the spring which would bring back the birds and flowers, and in giving life to all else would surely not entirely forget herself.

"You know, mother, the doctor said that, when the roses came, my sufferings would be over. Will the roses soon be in bloom?"

"I have seen some already," replied the mother; "the Governor's wife and daughter had them in their hair when I saw them get into the carriage, but those roses, I think, only grow in the hot-houses of the rich."

There was silence, broken only by Greta's short cough. All at once, carried away by one solitary fixed idea, such as so often haunts the brain of the sick, she began again to talk about the roses, to pine sorrowfully for their possession, and by alternate beseeching, coaxing, and commanding she at last induced her mother to go out in search of some for her.

The poor woman left the bedside possessed with the one desire of pacifying her child, and traversed the streets with weary steps, debating in her mind what excuse she could make on her return for not having procured that which she felt was entirely beyond her reach. With bowed head and sorrowful heart she kept repeating to herself the words of the physician, so full of hope for Greta: "At the coming of the first roses she would suffer no more"; and well as she guessed the mournful meaning of the prophecy, she could not help being in-

spired for an instant by that spirit of hope which buoyed up her child. Quickening her steps, she took the road as if by a sudden inspiration toward the Governor's house, hesitated as she reached the brilliantly lighted mansion, but at last, taking courage, knocked timidly at the door, which was immediately opened by a man-servant.

"What do you want, my good woman?"

"To speak to Madame Paterson."

"I cannot disturb Madame at such an hour of the night."

"Oh! I implore you, let me see her!"

The servant repulsed the poor mother, and was about to shut the door in her face when Madame Paterson and her daughter, with roses in their hair and on their bosoms, crossed the hall, paused to question the servant, and then approached the widow, who briefly and tearfully told her pathetic story:

"O, Madame! O, Mademoiselle! I implore you to give me one rose, only one, for my dying child! God, who gave his Son for the redemption of the world, will reward you."

Madame Paterson shrugged her shoulders with a mocking laugh, and passed on. Her daughter, the brilliant Edele, remarked that her father did not buy roses for their weight in gold, to throw them away upon street beggars.

The door closed, and the woman turned toward her home. On passing the Church of Sainte-Britta, she perceived the clergyman's wife laying large bouquets of roses on the altar, full blown blooms of rich red, as well as branches of exquisite buds of blush, orange and pink.

The lady formed a sweet picture as she bent over and arranged the floral treasures sent her by a rich parishioner of her husband's. Her blue eyes sparkled with delight, and her voice was soft and silvery. She was the mother of six lovely children, and the widow felt that she would surely pity her in her bitter grief. Full of these hopeful thoughts, she entered the church, approached the altar, and preferred her modest request

for one rose wherewith to gladden the eyes of her dying child.

Madame Neils, although by no means devoid of kindly feeling, was proud in her own way, and had determined that Sainte-Britta should be the best decorated church in the town. In what she mistook for pious enthusiasm, she forgot that the only true temple of God is the human heart,—that a charitable action is more precious in his sight than the costliest earthly offering which can be laid on his material altar. In the ardor of her outward devotion, she forgot that Christ himself had declared, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," and in her mistaken zeal she avowed that it would be little less than sacrilege to rob the altar of God of even one fair blossom. Upon so great and joyful a festival as Christmas, it showed, she added, a lamentable lack of religious feeling to prefer such a request. She pointed out that poverty, sickness, and death were sent by God himself, and the true Christian should submit to them, not merely without a murmur, but *joyfully*, kissing the rod in remembrance of the gracious declaration, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." She offered to call on the following day for the purpose of exhorting Greta to submit to the will of God with entire resignation.

The mother had now lost all hope, and was returning to her home in a still more desponding frame of mind than that in which she had quitted it. She walked on as in a dream, scarcely noticing the fast-falling snow, while longing with an intensity bordering on agony that she might have been able to procure even a few common flowers for her Greta. But none were to be found. Even the snowdrops hid themselves in the bosom of the earth, and no primrose nor violet would be seen for months. Thus sorrowfully musing, she continued her walk, and in a few minutes would have reached her miserable home, when by the light of her lantern she saw a few green leaves peeping from the foot of a hedge which enclosed a garden in the neighborhood. Stooping down, she scraped away the snow

with her hand. Yes, there were leaves large and lustrous, under which she found a few green blossoms, some full blown, others in bud, but all pale, small and without color, perfume or beauty.

"Ah!" thought she, "as there were no roses to be procured, these little flowers have been sent that my child may be spared the pain of knowing that there are hearts so cold and hard that no woes of others can soften them, and who care for no sorrows except their own!"

As she hastened onward, the deep-toned bell struck the hour of midnight and the joyous Christmas chimes broke on her ear. Kneeling reverently on the snowy ground, the mother's heart went up in gratitude, and she prayed the All-Merciful One to look with pitying eyes on her sweet and cherished Greta, pressing the humble flowers to her bosom. In another moment, she had risen and passed onward with her treasure.

As she drew back the curtain to offer the dark leaves and little green blossoms to her darling, she made a discovery which startled her. They had given place to large, exquisite white blooms tinged with a delicate pink.

"Roses! roses!" cried Greta, "O, mother! who gave them to you?"

"It was a Christmas present," replied the astonished mother.

At the sight of these lovely Christmas roses, the dying girl bowed her head, and softly kissed each precious blossom. Then she fell back on her pillow with a sigh. "The light that never was on land or sea" came into the beautiful blue eyes, and her lips half-opened with a radiant smile. The prophecy of the doctor was fulfilled. The roses had appeared, and her sufferings were ended. Her pure young spirit had passed upward in one ecstatic burst of love and thanksgiving.

Since that time (long ago) the plant which grows under the hedges, beneath the snows of winter, has continued to produce beautiful white blossoms and retained the name of "The Christmas Rose," which was given it by the good women of Tromsöe.

This merry story of a Christmas wedding, with its shadows of doubt and fear for the fate of Snowball, gives a good idea of a Texas Christmas. It is from the clever pen of Belle Finlayson Burdett.

SNOWBALL.

A STORY OF THE RED RIVER.

"MAHFY! O-o-o-o Mahfy!"

"Yes, Uncle Eb; I'se a-comin'."

"Pears like hit's time yose a-comin' an' a-humpin des 'ood in, ye triflin yallah niggah. W'y di'nt ye cum a-lopin' w'en I fuss call ye?"

"Kase I'se busy; an' I'se busy yit, a shinin up de an'iuns in de settin'-room. Miss Birgie in dah des a-makin' fings dance juber."

"Whah's Sindy?"

"She in dah, too, a-takin' de sparry-grass outen de gams, an' a-breshin' off de chaney bases an' de jimcracks in de wotnot."

"Whah's Mundy?"

"She in de spah bedroom a-puttin' on de bes' kivlids."

"Sho! yose all a pussel o' triflin, no-'count ejects takin' up de durin' day wid sich evlassin foolishness, w'en de burden an' sponsibility of de 'tire Krissmus an' weddin' a-res'in' on po' ole Ebneesuh. I don' mine pintin' out how tings ought to be shaped on a gran' cuashun, kase Ise de oney one hyah dat kin. So Ise bleeged to soopbise, kase Ise de oney libbin' pusson dat cum wid ole Mahs from Jaugy whah dey knows wat high style am; an' how to preshate kaulity w'en dey sees 'em, an' wot know how to show spec' fo' speeriuhs. Soole Ebneesuh de oney one kin p'int out dese tings. But dis jinashun no manneh 'count. Ise don bin showin' an' a sposulatin' an' a-pintin' out twill Ise plum wo' out a-pintin'. Wat 'count's dem readin' books? De sassy niggahs wats was'in' time ober dem ain't got no mannehs, no trainin', no spec, no nuffin. In de ole times

down in Jaugy tings wus diffunt. In dem days Ebneesuh din't haf take no axe an' go inter de 'ood-pile; din't haf take no hoe an' go inter de fiel' an' chop cotton; din't haf—" but Martha had filled her apron with chips and darted off towards the house, thus cutting short old Eb's interesting reminiscences.

"Yo' Mahfy, send some dem chaps hyah ter tote in dis yer 'ood, yo' dispecful hussy."

"Wese all busy, cep Snowball, an' I dunno where she's at."

"No; fo' grashus, I don' spec yo dus. Nobody nebeh know whah dat cunfusin' chile ob de ole bad man am. She bettah mine an' watch out wid her prowlin' an' wid her traipsin'. She gwine fer to take all de luck outen de Krissmus an' outin' de weddin'. Dat gal aint fitten fo nuffin cep debilment."

The latter part of these remarks was, perforce, addressed to Joe, a taffy-colored youth, who was Eb's colaborer, if such he might be called, on the pile of hickory logs. The pliant sinews of the young man seemed to be doing all the work as an offset to the old man's admonitions.

"Uncle Eb, is Jaugy a much betteh place dan 'tis out here in Texas?"

"Oo-oo-oo-eh! Dis yer kintry ain't nowhah! Yo otter see de fine hosses an' fine housen an' cyahpets—chaney an' silbeh des jinglin' on de table. Roas' tukky an' bake shote wid yams an poun' cake, an' wine an' aig-nog, um-m, my mouf des watteh ter fink of 'em. Ole Miss an' 'e young Misses in silk coats an' Ebneesuh des walkin' 'bout in brack britches an' w'ite bes', a lookin' atter young Mahs an' ten'in' ole Miss. I 'low dey is a diffunce. It des make me plum weak to fink of dem times."

"An' didn't ye kitch no lickins?"

"Cose! We all hab ter be proobed. How's we gwine ter lahn bejence, an' mannehs, an' spec an' perliteness dout dat? Dat's how comes yo'uns ob dis jinashun so sassy an' so triflin, an' so no 'count—not fitten fo' nuffin."

While Uncle Eb wielded his tongue and rested his

axe, the entire household was in a state of unwonted commotion, preparing for a great event. Christmas was at hand; an occasion in itself of great importance; but, when coupled with an approaching wedding, the anticipated affair became momentous. The house was being put in holiday attire. The trousseau was completed, the guests invited, and the bride elect, Miss Virginia Ashton, only awaited the groom and the day to consummate her happiness.

In the kitchen Aunt Rose and a retinue of dusky assistants were in a state of perspiring excitement over the preparation of the dual feast. The tables, floor, stove, everything gave unmistakable evidence of the event in a vast commingling of feathers, flour, savory odors and steaming viands. Aunt Rose, crowned in a resplendent bandanna of astonishing pattern, was commander-in-chief; and gave orders in a manner commensurate with the occasion.

"Yo' Silby! dis tukky ain't haf swinged; an' yer's mo' feddehs. Dat kine bresin' ain't gwine do. Yo' reckon Miss Birgy's weddin' feas' gwine be spiled by sich ca'less hussy? Not w'ile Aunt Rose in de ban. Yo' spec a fine gemmin like Mahs Ebbett comin' all de way fum Albany to Red Ribbeh an' fine de vittles all messt up like sum dem Chocs fum de Nashun ben a cookin'? Now yo' keep y'alts deeshes offen dis table. Sally, honey, dat possum des look pow'ful temp'in'—des make me plum hongry to see it. Now des mak' some good punkin bread ter go long wid it; 'clare I could eat a hull pone right now. Whah's Snowball? Ef I don' maul dat aggrabatin', traipsin' nigger. Don lef dem knives des half shined up; an' de gallry not scoured off yit. Clean gone outten sight an' call. She's de mos' probokines' creetuh. I'll des see Miss July 'bout dat gal fo' she go clean ter puddishum. Uncle Eb, he say, we gwine hab wet Krissmuss; say gwine be a staum; say de wile geese dis maunin' fly low, way down, mos' tech de chiny trees ob dah; an' der wings go keswish, keswish; say we gwine hab heap rain an' a mighty wet spell."

That night, gathered about the huge fireplace in the

cabin, the young negroes were talking over the coming Christmas. One girl, about thirteen or fourteen, and as black as Erebus, sat placidly but silently among the chattering group.

"Yo nee'nt a look so biggoty, Miss Snowball; Miss July ain't gwine fer to let ye hab a spec Krissmus. She say Santy Clos won't fotch ye nuffin, kase ye so no 'count, an ye nebeh hope us a speck. She say ye des bettah mine out; she layin' up fo' ye; an' de day ob recknin' cum des atter Krissmus."

"I knows how ter mek ole Santy Clos fotch me fings. I'll git de rabbit's foot. I knows whah de ole Jack rabbit lib down in de brake by de byo, whah de steam cyah go obeh. I has ter go git a fraish track Krissmus Eve an' put um on de haf fo' de fi' an' let um bake. Den I hangs up my stockin' des obeh it an' den Santy Clos boun' ter fotch me ebyting. De hul flo'll des be loaded wid poun's an' poun's a canny, an' heaps an' heaps a goobers, an' piles an' piles a apples, an' oodles an' oodles a ebting.

"I'se bin a-watchin dat Jack rabbit. I des crawls erlong de rock unner de trussel, an' I clum way up de jise unneaf whah de steam cyah run. I set up dah an' I sees 'im cum kerlaperty, lapperty lap. Den he stop by he hole in de brake, an' des frow he big eye roun'; but he nebeh see Snowball, kase she way up on de jise obeh de wattah, unneaf whah de steam cyar run. I dun foun' Mass Jack rabbit's house, an' I dun watch um; an' on Krissmus Ebe, atter dark, I des creep down hah wid de shobel an' des slice up de clay wid de fraish track an' tote 'im home an' bake 'im on de haf fo' de fi. Den nobody das hoop me, kase de rabbit track done chahm all de badness 'way."

Thus the sable-hued girl sought to propitiate the adverse fates in a manner natural to her race, a race that believes implicitly in signs, charms, "sperrets," conjuring and the like. It is an inherent element in their composition.

Christmas Eve arrived, fulfilling Uncle Eb's prediction. A perfect deluge of rain set in, and continued unceasingly until it assumed the magnitude of a flood.

Cat Fish Bayou was out of its banks, swollen by the backwater, and this augmented by the torrents of water pouring in from all sides. The expected groom was to arrive by rail about nine o'clock that night, and Jap Ashton and black Joe were to drive to the depot to meet him.

They were in readiness very early, in consequence of the darkness and the almost impassable condition of the roads. The mud in this locality is something fearful to contemplate. When sufficient moisture is communicated to the soil, which is denominated "black waxy," its adhesive properties are astonishing.

As the party was about starting, Uncle Eb was in a state of frantic excitement searching the premises for something, and finally admitted that "de bes' lantun was done clean gone an' stoled."

Then some one ventured the information that a lighted lantern had been seen passing out the gate only a few moments previous, but owing to the inky darkness it was impossible to determine who carried it. So they drove off with such light as they could muster under the circumstances, and amid the maledictions of old Eb upon the presumptuous offender.

Meanwhile the household, including the bride elect, waited in much suspense until long after regular train time. Then came messengers bearing the direful tidings that the trestle over the Bayou had given way and precipitated the train into the angry, turbulent waters, and that nearly all the passengers were lost. The party who had gone for the guest had not yet returned. Miss Virgie wrung her hands and shrieked, and her mother seemed but little calmer; and the colored portion gave full vent to the excitement, which is a part of their nature.

Messengers kept floundering through the mud between Mrs. Ashton's house and the depot. The next report which came was that it was the approaches on the other side which had gone down and wrecked the train. After another waiting, word came that the trestle was, indeed, down, but that the train in some way had become aware of the mishap before rushing upon it,

and that it was safe on the other side of the Bayou. Then joy took the place of anguish, and laughing, which bordered on hysteria, followed.

During all the excitement at the house, Uncle Eb was the moving spirit of the drama. Sometimes praying, now exhorting, then advising and consoling. When the good tidings came, he commenced gesticulating, sawing the air with his sinewy arm, and freeing his burdened spirit by a tirade for the most part unintelligible, but seemingly rich in invectives.

"Des as I spected! Ise 'lowed all 'long 'at dat imp o' de farnal bad man ood fotch on dis drefful clamatation. She bin a traipsin de downward road ter dishun, an' a-baitin' de ebil sperrets, an' a-conjurin' wid screech owls an' joy birds an' rabbits' foots, an' a tollin' all de imps o' darkness 'bout dis yer house twel y'all done fell in de trap. I done tole y'all long 'go; now y'all see dat Ebneesur mouty nigh right. But ole Miss say, 'Oh, dey ain't no ebil in de gal. I oont hoop her. She des o leetle cooler in she ways. Don' be too hahd on de gal.' She ben a-pesterin' me twel my han's des eetched ter maul her good. Den, ter cap de crymax, she go steal de lantern, so dey be bleeged ter gib up gwine atter Mahs Ebbett—so de weddin'd be spiled and de Krissmus rooned an' ebyting gin ober ter de ebil un. Soon's dey say dat lantern gone fru de gate, I des feel it all fru my bones dat Snowball take it. She go slomickin' fru all dis mud an 'rain an' brackness fer to 'sult de ebil sperrets, an' I recken by dis time de debil got 'er sho' nuff."

At this juncture Jap and Joe arrived, bringing with them, in excellent condition, Mr. Everett. The greetings over, he gave an account of the perils that he and his fellow passengers had encountered and of their seemingly miraculous escape from a terrible death. It turned out that, just as the train was about to pull on to the bridge, some one away out on the structure, in the locality of the break, gave the engineer the signal with a lantern to stop. As that official was on the lookout for danger, he was not slow to obey the sudden summons, and whistle an abrupt "down brakes." But just

as he was stopping his train, he was shocked to see the holder of the lantern dashed amid falling timbers into the water below. The light shot down through the darkness like a fallen meteor, revealing as it went a dark body in close proximity which was doubtless the savior of the train.

The alarm being given, some parties living on that side started out at once with skiffs. In the mean time the people at the station had become aware of some calamity, and proceeded with boats and lanterns to see if the train had been wrecked. Mr. Everett had come over in one of these boats; but the greater portion of the passengers preferred remaining on that side until daylight. He stated that he should have felt in excellent spirits, notwithstanding the perils, the delay and the indescribable mud, had it not been for the distressing news that greeted them on this side the water. Here they were told that the heroic person who had saved the train with its precious cargo had been drowned; that the body of a colored person had been picked up and taken to a house on this side, where all the local medical talent had labored unsuccessfully to resuscitate it. At this moment the conversation was interrupted by the sight of an approaching team illuminated with many lanterns. It stopped, and a body was taken around to the rear of the dwelling. The wailing that now recommenced announced to Mrs. Ashton and her family that something fearful had occurred; and, on hastening to the apartment of Aunt Rose, they found the dark and lifeless form of Snowball stretched before the fire, with some of the colored people endeavoring to revive her.

It was a noteworthy incident that Uncle Eb was making the most strenuous efforts in this direction. He was laboring most assiduously, and with untiring effort and zeal, seemingly oblivious of everything save the task of bringing Snowball back to life. Mrs. Ashton and the others now united their efforts, and, through the philosophic treatment and advice of Uncle Eb, at length were rewarded by seeing the dusky orbs of Snowball slowly unclose.

Remaining until they were assured that the poor creature was fully restored, the white portion withdrew, leaving the patient to the tender nursing of Uncle Eb.

In the parlor Snowball became the absorbing theme of conversation. Her peculiarities were discussed; but so full of gratitude were they all for her last great deed that a unanimous meed of praise was awarded her.

"Now, children," said Mrs. Ashton, addressing her grown-up family, "you must go to the cabin where the darkies have hung their stockings, and find the one belonging to Snowball. Select the best the house contains, and fill the stocking and its surrounding space with whatever is likely to find favor with that peculiar creature—and spare nothing."

The next morning the family rose rather late, and found a clearer sky and cooler atmosphere.

The greetings of "Krissmus Gif'!" throughout the house were much later than common. Usually on Christmas morning the colored population are stirring before dawn, and rouse the sleepy household with their noisy clamorings of "Krissmus Gif'!" until they have been met and appeased by each individual member, great or small. The night's excitement and late hours had somewhat retarded and mellowed their sharp exclamations and persistent solicitations. Still, as the morning advanced and the sun was beginning slowly to assert his power over the nearly vanquished clouds, the negroes had regained something of their wonted Christmas hilarity.

Mrs. Ashton slipped out to see how fared the resuscitated heroine, and found her holding a matinée in the chimney corner with her friends, to whom she was dispensing with prodigal hand the choice viands which surrounded her. She seemed but little the worse for her impromptu bath, and her face was a study of satisfaction and gratified ambition, as she played grand duchess to her subjects. She did not observe her mistress as she entertained her appreciative audience.

"I tole ye ef I get de rabbit's track dey oodent dust ter hoop me, an' dat I git heap mo' fings den youuns git." Here she was interrupted by the approach of

Mrs. Ashton, who advanced and inquired after her welfare. Seating herself beside the girl, she gently took her hand and said:

"Snowball, how did you happen to be down on the bridge last night in the darkness and rain, just as the train was coming in? Tell me all about it."

"All de galls, dey tole me I isent gwine fer to git nuffin Krissmus, kase I neber tin ter scourin' off de gallery, an' a rubbin de knives an' a heap udder fings, an' I'se gwine fer cotch a hoopin' des soon's Krissmus done gone. So I goes down in de brake by de byo fer git de rabbit's track, so nobody das hoop me, an' so Santy Clos be bleeged ter fotch me heap fings. De watteh dun clomb clar top de rabbit's house, so I can't see he hole no mo'. Den I crope out on de jises twix de poases unner de trussel, an' I holloh 'r-a-b-b-i, o-o-o, r-a-b-b-i!' An' bimeby I hear suffin go ke-shunk, an' all de big bridge des shake like an ager fit, an' de big logs des go tumlin down in de brack watteh. Den I clumb up fudder an' fudder, twel I clar de top jise; an' all de big logs done gone in de middle an' de i'uns wat de steam cyah run on done gone too. Den I get feared de brack watteh cotch Snowball, too, ef I don' fin' de rabbit; kase I fink he hid unner some dem jises, so I calls, 'J-a-c-k r-a-b-b-i! o-o-o j-a-c-k r-a-b-b-i!' Den suffin say 'Toot, toot, toot!' an' I see great, long string bright light fru de dahk des runnin' fas' tode me, an' I say sho! dat aint no rabbit; bees de steam cyah cummin', an' its gwine full in de byo breckly sho. So I takes de lantun an' fro it roun' an' roun' des like de man down de stashun, but de ole injine des come close de aige de watteh, an' I feared he di'n't see yit, so I des go fer fling de lantun roun' gin, an' de big jise des go ke-shunk; an' I spec I go in de byo long wid de jise."

"Yes, you did; and were near being drowned. You did not get a rabbit's track. A rabbit's foot has no power to accomplish anything. You must never be so foolish again. You have received a lesson, I hope, that you will always remember. You were the means of saving the train and all the precious lives, and we are all deeply thankful to you. This is why so many things

have been given you. Christmas is a most appropriate day for you to receive these instructions; for it is the Savior's birthday. He sometimes selects one of his humblest creatures as a means of accomplishing his wonders. Be obedient and dutiful, and you will always be rewarded with Christmas gifts without the aid of a poor, helpless rabbit."

It is to be hoped that these excellent sentiments were appreciated by Snowball, who received them with a broad grin. And so, after all, the day's anticipations were consummated, it is hoped to the satisfaction of all —not excepting Uncle Eb. At all events, that worthy was seen emerging from the chimney corner where Snowball held court, with his hands overflowing with Christmas goodies and his mouth stretched to a degree that indicated supreme delight; and as he munched and muttered, and muttered and munched, some words were audible:

"Dat's de mos' sprisin' gal—des won'ful! Ha'nt ben fo' dat gal, Snowball, de hull, durin' luck ood a ben tuck clean outen dis yer Krissmus fo' sho. She sabed de day an' she sabed de luck. He, he, he! Des powerful sprisin', sho, am dat gal Snowball! He, he, he!"

Miss Madge Robertson, M.A., who has written for ROMANCE this bright little Christmas dialogue, ought, perhaps, to have concluded with the Christmas meeting of the two lovers at Port Hope, after their long separation. However, as we should know certain discreditable circumstances in the life of Percy, which Miss Dorothy could not know, possibly the glamour for us, as readers, would have been gone.

CUPID IN COUNTERFEIT.

A CHRISTMAS EPISODE.

Dramatis Personæ:

MISS KATHLEEN DINWOOD. MR. PERCY MOORE.

(The drawing-room in Miss Dinwood's home. The day before Christmas in the afternoon.)

(Enter Percy.)

Kathleen (languidly).—Ah. How do you do, Percy?

Percy.—I do as I please—oh. I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon—very well, thank you—the fact is—I was thinking.

Kathleen.—You surprise me.

Percy.—I was wondering how astonished people would be if one were to answer so, and the words slipped out.

Kathleen.—I hope you found out.

Percy.—Well, no, I can hardly say I did. You were, as usual, a sphinx. Are you always so calm, so languid, I might say—so indifferent?

Kathleen (touching a bell).—Always. (To the maid who enters.) Tea, please.

Percy.—Hem! (reflectively; then after a pause) I want to tell you something. May I?

Kathleen (resignedly).—Oh, yes, if you want to. Go on.

Percy.—In a moment. (The maid brings in the tea-pot, places it under a cosey and disappears.)

Kathleen.—Prudent, as usual. (She draws her chair slowly near the tea-table.)

Percy.—I don't think even you would care to have her hear what I have to say to you.

Kathleen.—Possibly not. I trust it is something lively because——

Percy.—Oh, you'll find it lively enough. I do.

Kathleen.—Because I am just a little tired of myself to-day. Cream?

Percy.—Yes, thank you. (She hands him a cup of tea.) But I should never be.

Kathleen (indifferently).—Be what?

Percy.—Tired of you.

Kathleen.—Really? (She leans back and gazes at a picture on the easel beside her.) You are very kind.

Percy (waxing bolder and moving his chair slightly nearer hers).—Because—I love you.

Kathleen (still critically examining the engraving).—Is it a game?

Percy (emphatically).—No. It's dead earnest.

Kathleen.—Indeed? How interesting.

Percy.—But you don't seem to believe me. I really love you, Kathleen.

Kathleen (in a languid manner).—Oh, I believe you. I have heard it before. May I give you some more tea?

Percy.—It's not a joke, Kathleen (rising and putting his cup down on the table with force).

Kathleen (bored).—I am sure it is not. I never thought you could make a joke.

Percy.—No! It means everything to me. I love you to distraction, and it is a matter of deep importance to us both.

Kathleen.—Really I fail to see how the fact of your loving me concerns me in the least.

Percy.—But I want you to care for me a little, Kathleen.

Kathleen (looking at him leisurely).—Ah! that is different. I shall try to oblige you, but——

Percy (eagerly).—Promise to try. Don't jest. It is a matter of life and death.

Kathleen (slightly contemptuous).—Life, probably. But let me see, what day is to-morrow?

Percy.—Christmas Day.

Kathleen.—Ah, yes. I had forgotten. (She moves her chair away from the tea-table, and gazes absently into the fire. A dreamy smile crosses her lips.) Christmas Day. (Softly, then she starts a little.) I beg your pardon. What was it you asked me just now?

Percy (stiffly).—Only to marry me.

Kathleen.—Well, I cannot, you know.

Percy (after a moment's silence).—Is there any special objection to me?

Kathleen.—Oh, a dozen, any one of which is sufficient.

Percy (gloomily).—Is it a baker's dozen?

Kathleen (laughing).—You are a delicious boy in some ways, Percy, but——

Percy (dejectedly).—But not nice enough for you.

Kathleen (irrelevantly).—What were you going to give me for a Christmas present in case I had accepted you?

Percy.—Well—I—I——

Kathleen.—Never mind. You ought to be even more grateful to me for refusing you. So I am going to ask a favor instead.

Percy (more cheerfully).—Anything you ask, Kathleen. What is it?

Kathleen (sitting up straight and gazing intently into the fire).—First let me tell you a story. You promise not to interrupt? (He nods.) Well——

Percy (with faint sarcasm).—Don't you think it will tire you too much?

Kathleen.—Last November I was staying at a farmhouse near Port Hope—I think you know the place (looking at him quietly. He looks back a moment, startled, then, resting his head on his hand, gazes in silence at the fire until she stops speaking)—and I became greatly interested in the farmer's family. I found them very delightful people, and I rather heartlessly rejoiced over their misfortunes, since by means of them I could there find a pleasant home for some months of the year. I learned that their house had been full of city people all summer. During my stay we became very intimate friends, and I soon knew the affairs of the household. I was especially attracted to one of the daughters, Dorothy. Her sweet name, her quaint

manners, a little way she had of holding her hands behind her back, a straightforwardness of gaze, added to her extreme delicacy, made her adorable. But to our great grief she became very ill. (Percy half started to his feet, a question in his eyes, and then quickly resumed his position.) Nothing much seemed to be the matter with her. She was simply weak and, to our anxious eyes, grew weaker every day.

One day I asked her if she would not like to come to New York with me. We were sitting in the low seat of my window. She was looking out at the tossing lake at the bottom of the cliff—you know, of course, how the farm runs down to Lake Ontario—and her eyes filled with tears. She held my hand tightly for a moment——

"I—you are too good," she sobbed, "but—but—I don't want to get well." I was naturally shocked. Girls of our age are not ethereal.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" I said, holding her in my arms. "Oh, don't say that! It is dreadful."

She jumped up suddenly.

"Come with me," she said feverishly. I followed her to her own room. It had often been laughed over by the household,—how carefully she locked us all out of this apartment. She locked the door after us, and then sank exhausted on the bed. I looked around, and on the walls and table I noticed several photographs, all of one man, many sketches of herself with his initials on the corner—I knew the man, you see—books with his name inside, his boating-cap and several other trifles which I recognized as belonging to the artist, a well-known man about town.

"He was here this summer," she said, pitifully. Then I understood. (She paused.)

Percy (his face pale and grave).—Oh, Kathleen, this is terrible. I never thought.

Kathleen (quietly).—It was not much, this sad little story, when I had heard it. There had been a few moonlight rows. Together they had watched the shining lake from the foot of the cliff. He had often sketched and praised her face, her hair, her eyes. They had read together—Shelley, of course, (scornfully)—and he had

given her scores of pretty gifts. Then he went away, kissed her good-by——

Percy (earnestly).—Oh, I did not. She would not let me.

Kathleen (half-smiling).—And then left her, left her with everything around her to remind her he had been there, nothing to show that he would come back, left her with a pain at her heart that nothing but his presence would ever make to cease, left her to die.

Percy (starting to his feet).—You are cruel—unjust——

Kathleen.—Wait. Every idle word he had spoken she had taken as earnest. His ways had not been her ways, and she had not understood. And he? He had played this little game of hearts, wholly unknown to her, so often with opponents as skilful as himself that he was cruelly careless of results.

Percy.—You are mistaken. I——

Kathleen (gently).—Wait, please. When she had told me her story I did not know what to do. The case was desperate; to console her was impossible. She was dying before my very eyes. Finally I told her that I knew the man very well, and then, as kindly as I could, that she had misunderstood; that, among the people he knew, that sort of thing was not meant seriously; that he had gone through the same thing with dozens of girls—myself, for instance.

Percy (fiercely).—You did!

Kathleen (regarding him with mild astonishment).—Well, haven't you?

Percy.—It was different with her.

Kathleen (cruelly).—Yes—she was innocent.

Percy.—How dared you tell her?

Kathleen.—She was dying. It was one chance, but (sharply) what does your part of it matter? Or how she regards you? She is the only one to be considered.

Percy (anxiously).—She is better? Tell me that?

Kathleen (shaking her head).—I can tell you nothing; besides what——

Percy (simply).—I loved her.

Kathleen.—You loved her?

Percy.—Let me tell you. I loved Dorothy with all my heart. I love her still—(Kathleen raises her head angrily) wait, (imploringly) do not judge until I tell you. I never had any idea she cared for me. I swear to you I never uttered a word of love to her (Kathleen made an impatient gesture of dissent). I—I cared for her—but I—I had no money, Kathleen, and I came away.

Kathleen.—And forgot about her?

Percy (miserably).—The girls I knew wouldn't have thought anything of—of——

Kathleen (smiling).—Shelley?

Percy.—And I was not in a position to marry, and I thought I might get over it, perhaps, but I haven't, Kathleen, and now that I know she cares—oh, heavens! —I'll go to her at once. (Starts for the door, leaving Kathleen standing. Then he comes back remorsefully.) But oh! my dear girl, I have never thanked you. Forgive me. I never can thank you. You were an angel.

Kathleen (smiling faintly).—A sphinx?

Percy (contritely).—How could I have ever called you indifferent? I thank you again and again for us both. (Kisses her hand and starts again for the door. Comes back suddenly.) What was the favor—the Christmas gift, Kathleen?

Kathleen.—That you marry Dorothy.

Percy (fervently).—And indeed I will if she will have me.

Kathleen.—Might I ask, just to gratify a little conventional curiosity, why you asked me to marry you this afternoon?

Percy (terror-stricken).—Oh, good Lord! Oh, Kathleen! You'll never forgive me.

Kathleen (coldly).—Probably not. But go on.

Percy (desperately).—You see it was a sort of a wager.

Kathleen.—What!

Percy (groaning).—I knew it. I am the most wretched of men.

Kathleen (disgustedly).—Oh, don't cry. Explain yourself.

Percy (falteringly).—A couple of chaps were up in my room, and we got to talking about girls——

Kathleen (sarcastically).—Of course.

Percy (wretchedly).—And they got to talking of your coldness and the calm indifference with which you had refused them both. One of them said that you were ice and that nothing would make you excited, and I bet I could rouse you.

Kathleen (in cold disgust).—And did these—these—gentlemen know the manner of your proposed rousing?

Percy (eagerly).—No, 'pon my honor. I wasn't to tell how I did it, but they were to take my word for it, and indeed I never thought of doing it that way. It came into my head suddenly after I came in—that—I would ask you to marry me. I knew with what contempt you would view the proposal, and I thought perhaps I could get you angry. I know you will never forgive me.

Kathleen.—It was unpardonable.

Percy.—Of course it was. I am a beast.

Kathleen (lapsing into her usual manner).—Oh, run away. I am tired to death of you. Take the night express to Dorothy.

Percy (dismally).—She'll never forgive me either if you told her all that.

Kathleen (half scornfully).—Tell her you love her first, and she'll forget the other. Women do. (Percy goes slowly and dejectedly away. He pauses at the door and looks back for a few moments at Kathleen, who is dreamily watching the fire.)

Kathleen (softly).—Christmas Day! (She smiles a little to herself.)

Percy.—Kathleen. (She starts.) What is it that makes you smile?

Kathleen.—Haven't you gone yet?

Percy.—I was watching you, Kathleen, and there is something. Tell me,—is there some one else?

Kathleen (suddenly looking up at him, with her eyes shining and a new look on her face).—Yes, there is, and he is coming to-morrow,—and oh, Percy! I haven't seen him since last Christmas Day. A whole year he has been away, and now he is coming. (Her voice trembles, and she laughs a little.)

Percy.—What a gay Christmas it will be, won't it?

And Kathleen (boyishly), may I say now that I have won my wager?

Kathleen (laughing).—Yes, and you tell them how; for to-morrow *it* is to be announced.

Percy (going out).—If I had waited until to-morrow, I shouldn't have made such an infernal donkey of myself, should I?

Kathleen (leaning back and looking up at him).—Oh, I don't know. This way, perhaps, was better for Dorothy.

The lot of the bachelor seems to be a hard one in every country. Here is the experience of one which has been written by "Djalma," and translated from the Italian for ROMANCE by Alma Lazzari.

A BACHELOR'S JOYS.

I HAD been living since my birth, fifty-five years ago, in an old-fashioned house, left to me by my father. It contained several apartments, the best of them rented to the family of a schoolmate of mine, who had seen some sad days. A financial crisis had impoverished him, and made it necessary for him to look for less expensive quarters. Being a lonely bachelor, and feeling at home in his family, I invented some trifling excuse for lowering the rent, and thus I kept my friend with me. His wife and daughter seemed overwhelmed with my kindness, showed great feeling, and I had many invitations to take dinner with them. Who would not have been charmed with so much attention from two beautiful ladies! My own apartments were on the third floor. I had cut off two rooms from them, which were rented to two sisters. One was a forewoman in a large establishment, the other a weak, gentle girl, who sewed at home, as I judged from seeing her at her window, always with a needle in her hand.

One day she was gone, but I cared nothing about them. The rent was paid promptly, and I had never seen much of them.

New Year's Day was drawing near, and, according to my usual custom, I wandered from store to store, in search of something original and costly for my little friend, my schoolmate's daughter! Little? Why, now she was a young lady, nineteen years old. Next month she would make her *début*, and I must find some pretty jewel to heighten her beauty.

I know she is rather vain and superficial, but all young ladies of her age are more or less vain,—and I try to find some excuse for her. The mother, a society

woman, has had very little time to educate the heart of the daughter. Time will help, I think, as I stop here and there to admire the exquisite gems displayed in the show-windows to tempt the buyers. Finally, I see just what I want—a ring of rubies and diamonds. I remember how the girl has talked about this very ring, with a longing sigh. How could I have overlooked the plain hint the innocent child had given me?

I buy the ring with a childish joy, and having stored it carefully in my pocket, I walk out of the shop, to find myself face to face with the mother and daughter, who with an enchanting smile and friendly salute hurry on their way. I feel like a scholar caught by his teacher with a cigarette in his mouth, and I actually put my hand to my pocket, to hide more effectually the surprise it contains.

I wander leisurely home, to find the wife of my janitor in an excited state.

"Oh, sir, what shall we do?" she says. "The girl on the third floor is very ill, and the doctor has just left, saying that she will not probably live another week."

"She must be taken to the hospital," I answer in a very positive tone. "See to it at once." I walk upstairs, feeling in a certain measure sorry for the poor girl. But I soon forget her. She is only a stranger, and, no doubt, will be better dead than suffering, and the hospital is a very good place, so I have heard.

I now remember my purchase, and, after admiring it again in its velvet case, I lock it in my closet to wait for the happy New Year's Day. Lighting a cigarette, I sit at my window, dreaming of days gone by, when I had thought of a plain gold ring to adorn a dear little white hand. I was only a student then, and full of enthusiasm. My father's objection cooled my warm heart, and I soon became an inveterate bachelor, and a very selfish man,—with only my own pleasure to consider, and no one to care for! But then I had friends; such good friends, even in my own house, in whose home there is always a place for me. Some men are far less fortunate.

And so I sit and forget even time. In a week-and-a-

half it will be New Year's. I am invited to my friend's for the Christmas dinner day after to-morrow.

The bell rings suddenly and with unwonted violence. Who can it be? Rosa, my old housekeeper,—she has been thirty-seven years with my family,—opens the sitting-room door and says: "Please, sir, a lady wants to see you."

"Let her come in, Rosa." I rise to meet the visitor. But a flush of annoyance comes to my face. It is my third-floor lodger!

"What can I do for you, madam?"

"A great deal, sir. Please, oh, please, take back the order to send my sister to the hospital! I could not go with her, and it would kill her."

I look at the tall, dignified figure before me. She stands, because I have not offered her a seat! Where is my courtesy? I am ashamed, and I hastily push an armchair toward her.

"No, thank you; my sister is ill, and needs me. I have only come to tell you that she cannot leave the house."

Her tone vexes me, it is so decided.

"I beg your pardon, she must go,—for I do not wish to have a death in my house, especially not in these days, when my friends——"

But, heavens! What is that! The woman reels, and I have barely time to prevent her from falling to the ground. What a brute I am! How could I speak so carelessly about a death, which would leave her all alone, and take from her her dearest and best friend. I should never, never forgive myself.

Rose is near at hand, and with her help I am soon relieved by seeing Miss Casanova open her eyes again. As soon as she is able to stand, she says in a low but cold voice: "I am sorry! Pardon the trouble I have made you, sir,"—and without another word she walks out like one in a dream, with a terribly bitter smile on her lips.

I felt so guilty that I stood like a statue, without a word of apology. When she was out of sight, I felt vexed at the part I had played in this tragedy, and to

console myself I went down to my friends to talk it over. Just as I was about to pull their bell, the door was opened by the maid, who was letting out a messenger with some parcel. I was such an every-day guest that she allowed me to step into the parlor, and went about her own work. This room was divided from a second one by only a portière. Hearing voices in the next room, I concluded that there was some visitor there, and I sat down, busy with my own perplexity, and waiting for the lady of the house. Ten minutes must have passed when I was recalled to myself by the sound of my own name. I rose involuntarily, but no one came in and I sat down again, while the voice went on:

"I am sure I don't mind the harmless old fool, mamma,—but can't we have one New Year's dinner without him? We need another lady, if you insist on having him, and our dining-room is not very large."

"But, child," I hear the mother say, "how can we offend him? I do not care to have him, but he always sends such nice presents and flowers. And then he might raise the rent. Papa says we must be polite."

"Oh, bother!" says the daughter. But I hear nothing more; I steal away like a thief, and close the door gently behind me, as I return to my bachelor apartment. How poor, how lonely I am! My flowers, my presents, buy a few smiles, a friendly word. It is unbearable, the sorrow that has struck my heart. Since my dear mother's death, though it is long ago, I have never felt so lonely and forlorn as now: I must go out, I must walk, I must see people. I rush down the stairs, and in my impetuosity nearly knock down two men who are coming in.

The janitor's wife directs them upstairs, and turning to me, she adds: "The ambulance."

Oh, horrors! The ambulance stands at the door, and those two men are going for the poor girl, according to my orders. If they reach the door before I do, the shock of those well-known uniforms may kill her. I forget my age and my usually dignified walk, and hurry upstairs, calling all the way: "Stop! Wait! Do not go on!" and I heave a sigh of intense relief as one

man turns his head. They wait—I actually believe with a suspicion that I am out of my mind, for I hold my hat in my hand, and must look almost wild with excitement.

"Please step in here," I say, and I open my own door.

"Rose, bring two glasses of wine. Sit down, my good fellows. I am happy to tell you that the call for the ambulance was a mistake. Allow me to pay you for your trouble, and tell them at the hospital that it was all a misunderstanding."

The men accept my explanation, thanking me politely, and depart with a lurking doubt as to my sanity. But what do I care? The poor girl is safe. I wonder how she is. Perhaps she knows of my heartlessness, and dreads the arrival of the ambulance. Will Miss Casanova ever forgive me? She looks so proud, like a queen, more than like a bread-winner.

"Rosa," I try to look unconcerned, "how is the sick girl?"

"Shall I inquire?" says the good old soul, with a glad ring in her voice. And without waiting for an answer, she hurries from the room, and I hear her speak in a subdued voice to some one outside. She returns to tell me it is the doctor, who has just gone in to prescribe for the invalid.

"Tell him to come and see me, Rosa, when he comes out."

Something has lighted up her dear old face, and her eyes look kindly into mine, but she talks little. I am less lonesome when I look at her, for she loves her cranky master, I know.

Presently the doctor is ushered into my library. I find that he is an acquaintance of mine.

"How is the invalid?"

"She has pneumonia, but I am glad to see a slight change for the better to-night."

"Thank God!" I say with a profoundly sincere accent.

"I did not know you were acquainted with them."

"Poor girls! I do not know them, but I am sorry for the poor sufferer!"

"The sufferer, as you call her, is the least to be pitied. The older one is a heroine. I knew her in Florence, when she was still the much-sought daughter of the rich banker Casanova. He had a second wife and a little girl by this second marriage. Do you remember his complete ruin? It was followed by his death. His wife became an invalid from sorrow, and Miss Casanova, left with two helpless people on her hands, sought in vain for paying work. Florence attracted her, and she decided to try a place where no one knew of her former life. She began at the very beginning, living a life of sacrifice, but soon reaching a better position by her industry and intelligence. The mother died, blessing the faithful heart, sure that the delicate child left in her sister's care would be safe. Yes, she has been safe, and I shall spare no trouble to cure her."

"And these are the women I wanted to send away!"

I thanked the doctor, and begged him to let me know if I could do anything for my lodgers. Then, under a sudden impulse, I confessed to the doctor my heartlessness, and the story of the ambulance, and how I had deeply regretted my behavior. Would Miss Casanova ever forgive me?

The doctor looked almost severe, and rising he said: "Try and make amends by leaving the two ladies from this time unmolested."

He said good-by without much cordiality.

The next day a bouquet was brought, of beautifully fresh cut-roses. It was intended for my friends downstairs, but I sent it to Miss Casanova. It came back with regrets. "The perfume might hurt the sick sister."

A proud girl, Miss Casanova. I never asked after them, but I allowed Rosa to give me news, which she did so discreetly that it seemed quite her own wish to inform me, while I was really thinking of nothing else all day. A summons came to me from downstairs, but I pleaded a bad cold and ate my lonely dinner with gusto, to the high delight of Rosa, who could hardly believe it to be true.

The invalid became daily better. New Year's Eve

arrived, and I heard that all danger was past, as if it were of a near and dear relative. Rosa was the bearer of the good news. Then she confesses that she has carried the sick young lady every day some broth, chicken, or mutton, also beef-tea. To-day she has broiled a little leg of chicken. I listen, then I jump up.

"And she has not refused?" I break out. "Not refused? She has accepted, Rosa?"

"Yes, sir, and to-day, as she has gone to take some work to the shop, I sat with the dear, sweet, young lady, in order that she might not be left alone."

"Oh, you dear good Rosa! Then you, you have softened the cruelty of your master?"

Somehow I do not care now to be alone. Of course I send an excuse for my absence from the New Year dinner of my old friend. I enjoy better eating by myself!

A year has gone! Where is the poor, lonely, tolerated bachelor? Alas, he is no more!

He sits gravely, a happy husband, and nods joyfully at Rosa as she announces dinner.

"Doctor, your arm to Miss Casanova, and take her in to dinner."

"Miss Casanova" is a dainty, delicate little damsel, for the other Miss Casanova is my own sweet wife. She has forgiven me!

Rosa, all smiles, stands in the door. I really believe she is as happy as we are.

As the doctor is to be my brother-in-law, he has decided to lay down his arms and be as forgiving as the rest. My friend downstairs is still there, but he leaves soon in order to make room for us. We meet, we bow, we smile and pass!

ROMANCE.

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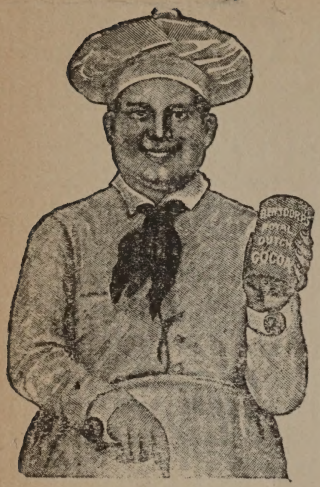

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THE DOCTOR AT MAUD'S.

A STORY OF THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAINS.

A DAY of drizzling rain had ended in an early evening, the rushing wind and utter darkness of which made it appear as if very late at night.

The black sky, ribbed with bent, livid streaks, crouched over the earth so closely it almost seemed that the blasts shrieking through the stark trees were her piteous cries for relief.

At times there was quiet; then far off rose a hollow sound, faint but growing till it swelled into a roar which swept through the one-streeted village with a rush as of mighty waters.

As it tore along in one of these crescent gales, among the small houses around which it flung a terrific arm was one, the front door of which had been standing slightly ajar; when the gust came on, this door was slammed sharply from within, and a woman who had been peering into the riotous night turned back to the open fireplace with a shiver of satisfaction.

She stood backward to the mass of light, her hands clasped over her head in a way to reveal the youthful lines of her form; she was amply moulded, with the serene, impassive beauty which the old Greeks embodied in their marbles; a type not likely to be the quarry of complex emotions, but full of human interest, simple and natural. Against the shadowy wall beyond, her face gave its profile in softly drooping lines; the small knot of her light hair, which drew the straight locks flatly from her temples, had a fictitious golden shimmer from the varying flames.

As she circled about to bring herself in more cordial speaking range of an elderly woman knitting in a rocking-chair on the hearth, there was a slowness in her movement hinting at strength, and matching, when she spoke, the drawling but powerful tones of her voice.

"Ye 'lowed thet red mornin' we hed yestiddy ud bring rain, didn't ye, maw?" she asked.

Mrs. Rankin bent her head sideways in a motion implying the unimpeachable verity of her weather prophecies.

"Humph! I reckon I've lived in K'ntucky long 'nough ter know whut a red mornin' means,—light the lamp agin yer paw comes—M'lissy—an' anyway I knowed 'twuz time fer the moon ter change an'—whut do ye wanter waste them matches fer, thet-a-way, when thar's lighters a'ready rolled in the chany mug, ye triflin gyurl ye?"

Melissa laughed a little. It was not the low ripple of sound which refinement gives to mirth, but her whole face shared in it, the gray eyes narrowing to a bright thread between thick lashes which caught the infectious gayety and fluttered in harmony with it.

"It's done lit now," she smiled, walking across the room, in her hand the lighted match, a tiny banner stave, the red pennant from which trailed into smoke, as if it waved above some mimic battle-field.

The unshaded lamp stood on a kitchen table, upon which it cast a halo which showed forth the geometrical design of the yellow oil-cloth cover. Similar yellowish tones hovered on the lighter parts of the bare floor, the boards of which, seemingly arranged to suit the exigencies of their various shapes and sizes, were worn into troughs, out of which here and there a dark knot raised its defiant knuckle. A sewing-machine of ponderous, old-time make stood impressively before the single front window, a blue jean garment in its steel jaws; on it were a pair of massive shears, and some iron-bound spectacles.

The extreme end of the room had distinctly undomestic characteristics. There were shelves full of bottles, and a long narrow table holding a pair of scales

and a mortar and pestle. Swung from a corner of this counter by a thong of leather were some opossum- and raccoon-skins, a collection of silvery pelts, from their number hinting at a local means of requital for medical services; this corner was clearly a doctor's office set down in the living-room. "Huh-h-h! thet wind do sound cold," shuddered Mrs. Rankin, hitching her chair nearer the fire by throwing her weight from one side to the other with a forward lunge. "I wish yer paw 'd be gettin' in, M'lissy; he hevn't looked well o' late. Whar at did he go, anyhow?"

"Ole lady Hines wuz took curyus this evenin', an' 'bout four erclock Jake kem fer paw ter go out thar," answered Melissa, dreamily regarding her finger-nails. "He never waited fer paw ter hitch,—jes' piled him inter the light wagon he hed druv in, an' put out like a white-head."

Mrs. Rankin groaned. "Six mile thet is; I jedge the ole lady mus' be po'rful low, but I 'spise on the face o' the yearth ter hev yer paw 'tend them fur country calls; it makes me right sick ter think o' him traipsin' mud roads o' nights like this'n. Yer paw hes knowed whut it wuz ter be right smart younger'n he is now, M'lissy."

There was a little pause, during which Mrs. Rankin warmed her feet in their heavy shoes, the front lacing of which showed lavish widths of purple stocking behind a coy durance of shoe-string.

Melissa looked at her furtively. She was of reddish brown complexion, a color deepened in her eyes and repeated in a faded tone in the thin hair descending over her ears; she was shrewd-looking and comely, though her mouth, always held slightly open, disclosed four sharply-notched teeth.

"A course," began the girl with wary hesitation, "'taint like he *hed* ter go;—I mean 'taint like thar wuzn' no'n else ter go ef he couldn't."

Mrs. Rankin turned slowly toward her daughter.

"Be you'n's hinting at Buckner Graves?" she asked with solemn emphasis.

"Laws, maw!" murmured Melissa in feeble denial.

"I take it thet-a-way, M'lissy Mary Rankin, an' I gin ye one piece o' advice, 'n' ye can take it er leave it; don't ye ever pass no sech remark nigh yer father. Ye've hed it mighty soft, becuz o' them three moun's in ole Duck Crick burrowin'-groun' whar yer sister 'n' brothers are moulјerin'; but I tell ye, Miss Slick, though yer the onies' one we hev, don't ye call no Graveses name afore yer paw."

"I do' know whut paw hes agin Buckner Graves," ventured Melissa, "an' anyways I hev no call ter take up fer a man I aint so awful well erquainted with nohow." She tossed her head proudly.

"Thet's all right," returned her mother, in tones implying further knowledge of the subject, not to be revealed. "Tain't 'cuz thet young man is a doctor, 'n hez settled nigh ter Maud's Station thet yer paw hes no use fer him; yer paw is no sech picayune critter ez thet, M'lissy. His hard feelin's goes a mighty sight fur'er back 'n the las' two years; it's more like twenty year, I tell ye."

Melissa had taken up some knitting, and the silver glimmer of the slim needles made a flickering twilight on her hands; her gown of faded brown gingham had certain æsthetic suggestions in its short, full waist, made in a fashion known at Maud's as "Gerrybawldy." The straight skirt hung close around her in slender folds, the cirrus-like shadows of which held no dark tones, but were misted in a soft grayness like those of marble drapery done in low relief. She touched her nether lips with the glinting point of a needle.

"Ye mean thet paw's set agin Buckner Graves on ercount of ole Hir'm Graves, his gran'-pap; ev'y one knows him 'n' paw wuz everlastin' a-pickin' at each other, but seein' the ole man hes been dead ever since I knowed anything, I shud reckon paw'd wanter quit visitin' the sins o' the fathers upon the children like he wuz Gawd-a-mighty hisse'f."

"Ye dont conceit whut yer father hed ter put up with from ole Graves, ye unnatchel critter ye," said her mother sternly. "He wuz one o' the meanes' men on the face o' yearth, fer all he owned ez fine a track o'

blue grass ez ever a crow flew over; no love er money cud hire him ter have a doctor come nigh him, though he wuz a sickly critter 'n' alwuz a gruntin'. He grannied hisse'f up with them medicines thet come a'ready mixed with d'rections pasted onter 'em, an' he'd gin away ter any pusson thet ud come 'n' ast fer 'em, jes' ter spite yer paw an' do him out o' trade. I never rightly knowed what wuz at the rale bottom o' thar misfeelin'—yer paw wuz alwuz mighty close on the subjeck,—but the likely shoats we lost through thet ole varmint's curin' folks free fer naught wuz 'nough fer *me!*—when he died, I jes' says, well—is thet a wagon comin', M'lissy?—I jes' says right out—it's a stoppin', ain't it, M'lissy? Open the door, so paw can see ter 'light."

When the doctor came in, all that could be seen of the actual man was a strip of face between the nearing edges of a knit scarf and a shaggy cap; from this shone a pair of very prominent pale blue eyes. "Fixin' ter freeze," he said deeply, as Melissa peeled off his heavy coat, revealing a man of short but heavy frame. His gray hair grew in a beautiful curve on a massive neck, which, seen from a square rear view, seemed a continuation of the head itself, fully as wide and quite as hard looking.

"I reckon I'm agein', Sary; I begin ter feel the cold lately,—huh! no, don't set nothin' out fer me, da'ter; I've et." As he spoke, he sat down in a forward slouching attitude and, to his wife's query regarding the patient just left, presently replied in one word, "Dyin'."

"Name o' sense!" exclaimed his wife; "'n' yit her folks wuz lookin' fer't, I reckon! She's been a failin' ever sence she hed that stroke."

"She had no reason ter hev a stroke at her age," said the doctor thoughtfully. "Look at me;—I'm not so much behind her in years, an' I'm ez robus' 'n' young feelin' ez when I wuz twenty." He struck his chest proudly. "Nary ache er pain'll get thar work in on *me* fer some good time yit, I warrant ye."

One morning, hard upon this assertion, it befell that the doctor, finding himself unable to get out of bed, was

much surprised. This feeling, by easy and natural stages, changed to one of apprehension, as days passing on left him worse and worse. In his own medicines he had little faith, realizing well that he comprehended only vaguely the nature of his disorder. Melissa's trembling mention of Dr. Graves discharged from the storm-cloud of her father's wrath a lightning-burst of fierce interdiction. It was at her peril if she dared to "fitch ary one o' thet goldurned ferrit tribe" nigh him.

For two weeks he had been bed-fast, when one afternoon, as it grew toward twilight, it happened that the doctor fell into a strangely serious mood, his mind in some sort hypnotized, as he gazed long and fixedly at the bright flaming of the fire; for the bed had been drawn into the living-room from the jutting closet which served as its usual place. Presently, by some occult means, none the less distinct of effect because mysterious of working, he seemed to know that his life was slipping out of its rugged hold. The impression came to him unattended by excitement of feeling; it seemed fearless and natural.

His wife was moving about in the bustle of nervous unrest into which some women are thrown by the sickness of others; the doctor's eyes fell on her with new interest. "I'm a goin' ter die, I reckon," he mused, with the calmness of one to whom Death's face has been long familiar, "an' I'll hev ter tell her; passel o' times I hev put it off, but I won't get the chance ter put it off no more." He called her softly. Under the strange power of sickness to waken dormant affection, and induce visible signs of it in natures long undemonstrative, he felt like adding a fond epithet to her name.

She came to him, wiping her hands on her dark apron, commonplace, stolid and elderly, but seeming to him very like the young woman he had married, different from other Kentucky girls he knew, browner, more alert.

"Sary, I ain't a wantin' ter skeer ye,—but ev'y one hes ter die sometime—heh, Sary?"

"Why, *paw!*—why——"

"Thar now, thar-r-r now, I'm only passin' the re-

mark thet folks all hev ter go sooner er later, an'—it's jes' ez well ter hev a cl'ar mind in case ye wuz ter get a call when ye wuzn' lookin' fer't—hum?"

"A course," admitted his wife apprehensively, "but your mind's open 'n' above-board, paw, ef ever any one's wuz; I don't reckon thar's a many more fitten ter go then you-n's—when yer time comes."

"Well, I do' know; I aint whut ye've thought me, Sary."

"Huh?"

"No; I've hed ye fer risin' thutty year, but—oh-ah! I knowed it'd be hard ter tell, but——" He turned as if to hide his face; at the left side of his neck there was a piteous fluttering, as of some caged thing warring at its bars. Mrs. Rankin gasped with fright, and the doctor took her hands firmly in his own.

"I'm kam now, Sary; set down hyere whilse I tell ye somethin—erbout myse'f. Ye mind thet I clarked in a store at Maysvulle fer a spell, afore I knowed ye? Yes; well, 'twuz thar I firs' leaned a limber ear ter the devil thet is a prongin' me right now. 'Twuz a store whar they kep' bams n' balsams n' settlers powders n' linymen's n' all the list o' them paten' medicines ye hev heerd me cuss tell the air wor blue ez Ballyhoes. I got ter knowin' whut all they wor good fer, n' like ez not, when a pusson wuz'n feelin' up ter the notch, he'd come ter me an' spin off his yailmen's an' get me ter jedge whut his sestem wuz a hawnin' fer.

"D'reckly I got ter thinkin' I knowed it all. Think-sez I ter myse'f, ye stavin' fool, whut are ye triflin' yer time away hyere fer?—Carnt ye sense it thet the I'mighty hev gin ye more head'n' He hev yer fellers?—pick up 'n' get out er hyere; thar are slews o' places whar they hev no doctors. Whut you wanter do is ter put out 'n' find sech a place 'n' streng up yer sign 'n' set up fer a physician. Whose goin' ter hustle eroun' ter diskiver whar at ye wuz churned out?

"Them wuz my studyin's, Sary, an' on the stren'th of 'em I took ter hangin' roun' ole Doctor Blanmire, an' a-peskerin' the livin' daylights outen him a-astin' him whut-all he done fer this, thet 'n' the other, till

one day he churned his eyes onter me right quick—he wuz a leetle low man thet 'peared all head till ye see his eyes 'n' then he 'peared all eyes—'n' s'he, 'Whut ye drivin' at, young man?—spit it out—spit it out; life's too durn ter thunder short ter beat eroun' this-a-way.'

"He wuz a po'rful hand ter swar; mighty nigh e'v'y word he loosed wor a yoath; he'd cuss a patient till they wuz skeered inter fits, thet man would, but he wuz the fines' doctor in the state—an when he fixed them greeny pop-eyes o' his'n onter ye, ye couldn' keep nothin' from him ter hev saved yerse'f from petch-forks 'n' demnation. He hed my scheme outen me 'fore I knowed whar I wuz at; took it mighty curyus too;—never passed a word agin it; on'y larfed a leetle ter hisse'f, 'n s'he, 'Go on—go on! ye shell hev my backin', young feller.' He lowed thet, jedgin' from the number o' young faller-head mediculs thet wuz bein' churned loose onter the community, folks ud hev ter charnce it fer thar lives any ways, an' I might ez well be gettin' my hand in ez the rest. He said thet human nature wuz the stuff ter practice on, 'n' thet the proper study o' mankind wuz man; dead corpses ud do at a pinch, but he said he'd take a live man ev'y time.

"Well-awe-well! arter he promised ter stake me like, I went in, soul 'n' body. Maud's wuz the place I struck, arter prospectin' some; I liked the town well, an'—you lived clost by. I got erlong from fa'r ter middlin'; calermel an' quinine wor my stand-bys—yer alwuz safe ter plug any leak in a K'ntuckyan's health with quinine—folks 'peared ter set considerbul by me—all cep' ole Hi Graves; ah-h-h, he wuz a slick ole rat! He suspicionated thet thar wuz a screw loose in me somewhars, but he never cud place it. I wuz his match, 'n' he never got erhead o' me, but he gin me heaps o' trouble; he knowed Doctor Blanmire, an' though I wuz right sure the ole doctor wouldn't never a gin me away when he wuz right-headed, I alwuz hed a feelin' thet he might a let somethin' slip when he wuz in liquor,—he wuz a hard drinker, 'n' I've seen him loaded ter the gyuards many the time.

"When cholery times kem—wuz n't thet about '59,

Sary?—I nearly los' my mind them times! They died on me so fas' I cud har'ly keep tab on 'em—'twuz jes' a groan 'n' a flap 'n' thar lay a hulk o' nothin' afore ye, with starin' eyes a-glarin' up at ye with a look in 'em like I've often thought His'n ull hev when I stan' afore His jedgemen'."

The doctor's voice broke with dreary huskiness; his wife laid her hand on his glistening forehead. She was far from understanding his state of mind; since he was sick, doubtless a feverish discomfort of body had induced this confession; she crooned out some soothing words as to a fretting child. "Thar, thar; ye never went ter hurt no'n, paw; thar's no'n nigh ter Maud's thet don't b'lieve the ole doctor hes forgot morr'n these new school electrics 'n' homyparfs 'll ever know. Mighty few doctors didn't lose chol'ry patients, I reckon; don't ye worry no more—'taint wuth w'ile."

The doctor's head turned restlessly on the high pillow; on top of his head his hair shone like thin silver foil spread closely on a skull; when his lips parted, the inside of his mouth looked raw and red. The large flat fingers of one hand crimped the sheet's edge as if seeking to work off into some other substance their own unrest. "Ye don't 'pear ter sense whut I hev tole ye," with no irritation in his voice; "er mebby I hev n't tole ye thet them thar paten' medicines I hev ranted erbout, an' 'lowed wor all drawed from the same kittle an' brewed by the devil fer the destruckshun o' the onwary an' the grabbin' o' the fool's pence, are whut I hev used myse'f—put 'em inter other bottles an' made out like they wuz my own contrapshun."

Mrs. Rankin was stirring some mixture in a tin cup; occasionally she tasted it from the end of a spoon; it was broth, and she was more intent upon it as a means of physical comfort than upon delving into her surprised and shaken mind for spiritual consolation. Though startled at her husband's last admission, she had not yet been touched by any sense of personal injury. The wrong that had been worked seemed abstract and indefinite. Who had suffered? Not she, whose boast had been ever that "her man made her a

good livin'." Manifestly there was no reason why she should resent the methods he had used for her support. Being practically given, she dismissed all thoughts not relative to the present, and holding forth a spoonful of the liquor, on whose surface little oily circles were edging each other, besought the doctor to taste it.

He waved it off with a gesture that took half its despairing pathos from the bone of a fore-arm revealed by it. "Sary, them three chillern down ter ole Duck-Crik burrowin' groun'—ye mind them chillern, Sary?"

"Don't ye go ter studyin' on 'em," shuddered his wife, thinking that those about to die are wont to recall their dead.

"I ain't a gointer mention 'em seprully—on'y Livy—she wuz the first, Sary. D'ye mind how long she looked fer three year, when she wuz laid out? M'lissy favors her some, heh, Sary?"

"Well, I don't know, paw," replied his wife, unable to keep herself from proud motherly recollections; "Livy hed a dimple, but now agin M'lissy wuz fa'rer-complected, fer all she wuz sech a spindlin', bald-headed baby ez uster make me eshamed ter show her."

When the doctor spoke again, his voice was lower. "Hevn't it struck ye sence I hev been a talkin' thet them three chillern might a been livin' yit ef I hed raly knowed how to doctor 'em, 'n' hedn't sorter 'sperimented with 'em, a tryin' ter cure 'em when they got baby yailmen's thet dumb-founded me?"

It was growing dark; through the front window could be seen a streak of yellow binding the west; the earth lay below it swart and still as the face of an Eastern woman whose dusky brow is filleted with narrow gold.

A lighted match gleamed to the floor from Mrs. Rankin's inert grasp; it flared briefly and went out, but something like its fire glinted from the woman's eyes as she turned them on her husband's face. It was the visible working of a fierce instinct of motherhood, suddenly aroused, that whirled in her brain, misting outward things in dizzy red, and drawing into its vortex all wifely love and womanly pity. A moment went by

before her rigid nostrils lost their tension as her stiff lips unbent.

"Ye kilt 'em, did ye?" she queried in a voice that strangely seemed her usual tone; "them chillern Gawd gin me—thet hed my blood in thar veens . . . I hev no words . . . fer ye . . . on'y when Him yer goin' ter asts ye whut bars ye from bidin' whar He is—show Him yer hands—He'll see the red stainin' 'em."

A tongue of fire shot gayly from a burning log, and at the same instant the tea-kettle whirled a merry stave from its iron throat; it was as if these inanimate things felt a sudden incongruous mirth at the nearness of human pain. Just now the door opened and Melissa came in; meeting her mother's gaze, her own eyes caught the fear of it. "Is paw worse?" she breathed.

For answer Mrs. Rankin passed into the smaller room and shut the door behind her.

Darkness came down and waned again through the lessening hours of morning. Though close on seven o'clock, the earth still hung in twilight, a dim sphere clouded in uncertain mists of its own vague, far-reaching tree-tops. Chimneys of neighboring houses began to waken with long yawns of southwestward pluming smoke. Lights stirred in some windows with the unforceful red of flame under menace of a coming sun. The sky looming infinitely high, of the pale violet hue that seems the natural color of air, had no floating fleck to catch the eye and give reality. Presently, after the violet had changed to gray, the shorn winter trees shook off their obscurity, and lifted shock, bristling morning heads against the clear pallor. Now at first could be seen that slight snow hung fluttering on the air, save for the powder on the ground, seeming never to fall.

Day was come, but her feet, sandaled in gray, had mounted the east unseen, when Melissa lifted the latch of the bedroom door and went in to the lonely woman sitting silent and unheeding at the small window.

"Come on out, maw," said Melissa, beseechingly.

"I shell never put eye on yer father's face agin," answered her mother.

Melissa knelt at her side. "Maw, he tole me about it; he never went ter hurt them chillern, maw."

"He done it jes' the same, M'lissy."

"Aw, no, he *never*, maw!—look at me—didn't paw fahly keep life up in me when I wuz teethin' an' thet thin ye cud hyear my bones scrounch ef ye teched me?"

"We never looked fer ye ter live, M'lissy, but I reckon the Lord didn't want ter take my las' hope erway, so He lef' ye ter comfert me."

"He'd a took me ef He'd a wanted me," said Melissa with fatalistic brevity, "comfert er no comfert. Paw done the best fer me he knowed how, an' he done the same fer them babies thet went afore me; ye'r mighty onreasonin', maw, ter get outdone this-a-way becuz paw wuz never reglar'y trained ter be a doctor. Who trained the firs' doctor thet ever was?—Who give him his papers? He hed a knack o' healin' suff'rin', I reckon, an' o' ministerin' ter them ez wor yailin', an' ef he ever hed any spechal larnin', it must a been Gawd-a-mighty ez teached him."

"They might a been livin' yit," murmured the older woman.

"Not ef they wuz wanted up yander," said Melissa. "Aw, mammy, mammy!—ef so it wuz that I loved a man 'nough ter marry him, thar's nothin' on top o' this green yearth cud turn me agin him."

She bent her face downward. Her mother lifted it by the small smooth chin, and looked at the soft color unevenly diffusing it. The gray eyes held firm under that penetrating gaze; the newness in them was not the shy consciousness of a girl's easily disturbed heart, but the something deep and calm that tells of womanhood reached.

As Mrs. Rankin looked, her own youth flung itself before her. He who had taught her such gladness as now streamed upon her from their child's face, lay on a bed of sickness hard by, old and broken on the wheel of his own mistakes. A rush of tenderness swept over her with such strength as seemed to force her to her feet, and hold her rooted there, overcome with a curious diffidence.

She turned from Melissa, and absently filliped a wisp of thread from the sleeve of her coarse blue gown. "Ef I hed anything ter speak ter yer paw—ef I wuz ter go in thar now, he'd listen at me, wouldn't he, M'lissy?" Then a sudden fear strained her eyes outward. "Aw, M'lissy!—did ye leave him alone becuz he wouldn'—never *need* ye no more?"

Melissa laid a strong arm around the suddenly weak and shrinking form.

"Law no, mammy!—he's not alone; Buckner is with him; an' jes think, maw!—he jedges thet paw aint near so low ez he conceited hisse'f; aint thet good?—an' Buckner says——"

But her mother was sobbing hoarsely on her shoulder.

Every boy will be pleased with this true New Year story of wild life in Australia. It is written for ROMANCE by W. Thomson.

TWO NEW YEAR DAYS.

DURING the three weeks immediately preceding the first day of January, 1853, a number of us, United States and British Americans and Englishmen, who had come out to Australia on the sailing ship *Revenue*, which left New York in July of the just expired year, were encamped on the river Lodden, about four miles from the Commissioner's quarters and the Post Office at Forest Creek. Notwithstanding all our previous reading on the subject, it appeared very strange to us that this should be the hottest season of the year and that the sun should stand due north at noon!

We were all comparatively "new chums" as yet, and knew little about digging—a circumstance which may account for the fact that twenty of us had formed ourselves into a company, and were then engaged in cutting a huge trench across an elbow of the river, with the intention of diverting it into a new channel and thus obtaining access to its bed at a point where, striking against a high ledge of rock, the stream turned at right angles to its hitherward course.

Very naturally, we supposed that here would be lodged much fine gold, as I have no doubt was actually the case, though the men who completed the big ditch never got at it; for, as I long afterward learned, when they reached bed-rock, they found it to lie several feet higher than the bottom of the pool; which, consequently, could not be drained without a too risky expenditure in the way of gunpowder and blasting, as well as labor.

The trench ran through an alluvial deposit of black soil, and our little company had already worked eighteen days on it; but, as events proved, had made the

fatal mistake of not giving a sufficient slope to its walls.

On that New Year morning, sixteen of our twenty went to work as usual, while the two men whose week it was to cook busied themselves in preparing a gala dinner, to consist of an enormous sirloin of beef, roasted by being suspended from a twisted woolen string and kept constantly revolving before an immense fire; and a mighty plum pudding—the latter having been placed in a great iron bucket and put on to boil at sunrise.

Moreover, in order to enhance the pudding's glory and make it more closely resemble the genuine holiday article, one of our fellows, with more money than discretion, had, the evening before, tramped eight miles to a squatter's station and bought nine fresh eggs at the moderate price of a half-crown (sixty cents) each! These, in due course beaten into the preparatory batter, were the only hen's eggs I ever saw during my whole sojourn in the Australian gold-fields, though after a while we got in the way of having a plum pudding—and a good one, too—every Sunday, as we always had lots of suet; and all the other ingredients, except the really superfluous eggs, were to be had at any store on any diggings—shopkeepers being invariably among the first to take advantage of a "rush."

Now it happened that both my especial chum, Fred Ross, and I had sentimental objections to working on New Year Day; so we decided to walk over to the Forest Creek (Castlemain) Post Office, then a canvas tent, not one of our crowd having as yet received a single letter from home. We thought it likely that some might have been by this time forwarded from Melbourne, and, as we were all becoming terribly homesick, their receipt was hourly prayed for with an intense longing easily understood by any one separated, as we then were, from country and kindred by the waters of three great oceans.

It is a trite saying that we never know what important events may follow, or be averted by, our most trivial acts—an axiom which Ross and I at least have good reason to bear in mind; for our abstention from

work on that particular day undoubtedly saved our lives.

When we left the Lodden at nine o'clock in the forenoon, the trench was about forty-five feet long, twenty feet wide at the top, fourteen at the bottom, and twelve deep. Midway on one bank was fixed a sort of platform of poles, on which stood three men, to receive and throw to others on the surface the soft earth tossed up from below by the three bottom diggers, *two of whose places would, as usual, have been occupied by Fred and myself if we had stayed at work.*

Well, we were returning, in great spirits, from Castlemain a little after noon, with a goodly number of letters, and on coming to the brow of the hill overlooking our camp, expected to see the boys seated, each one with a tin plate on his lap, impatiently awaiting our arrival to begin dinner.

What we did see was this:—all the men on that diggings standing motionless in a ring and gazing down upon something in their midst, as yet invisible to us.

Struck by an ominous foreboding, our merriment suddenly ceased, and we rushed down the slope at breakneck speed.

The gravely silent circle opened on our approach; and there, stretched dead upon the ground, lay the bodies of the three bottom workers, just extricated from beneath the treacherous landslide which had overwhelmed them in less than twenty minutes after our departure!

It seems that, without the slightest premonitory crack or crumble, one wall of the trench—not that on the platform side—had caved in and buried the poor fellows under tons upon tons of black earth; and, themselves in deadly danger from the other bank, it had taken the whole force of nearly one hundred men, working in relays, three hours to exhume the remains.

Thus our joy was turned to mourning; but men exhausted by physical labor must eat, and the dinner was finally partaken of in melancholy silence. Then, as it was now the middle of the Australian summer, we tenderly washed the bodies of our dead comrades in the

river and shrouded them as decently as our scant resources would permit.

While disrobing the quite unmutilated forms, none of us could refrain from pitiful tears on finding that close to each forever stilled heart was hidden a memento of home in the shape of a daguerreotype of mother, sister or sweetheart — who never again, in this world, might behold the face of her beloved wanderer.

The last rays of the setting sun still shone upon the summit of the adjacent hill when, side by side, we laid all that was mortal of our late companions in a deep grave therein dug, while over the lonely sepulchre one of us reverently read the Church of England burial service; which, to me at least, had never before seemed so grandly beautiful and impressive.

That night, while the seventeen of us who were left sat around the camp-fire, young Ross said:

"Boys" (we were all friends, and never yet had used among ourselves the ordinary digger appellation of "mate"), "this is a sad ending of our first Australian New Year's Day. Maybe it will cheer us up some if I tell you of one which, in Canada two years ago, turned out more happily."

There was a general cry of "Do, Fred, do," and the boy began:

"Some of you know that my home is in a backwoods township, about eighty miles northwest of Toronto and not far from Georgian Bay. My father, who was formerly a captain in a regiment of British cavalry, sold his commission in 1842 and emigrated to Canada, where he bought a six-hundred-acre, partially-cleared farm, wishing to give his five boys and four girls a better chance in life than a family in moderate circumstances can have in the Old Country. I was only eight years of age then, and my baby sister not half as many months.

"My mother" (I wish I could convey an idea of how tenderly Fred spoke that word whenever occurring in his story), "though a tiny little thing, who wears a number two boot and a five-and-a-half glove, is as

brave as an Indian princess, and she and my father are just like lovers yet. So we were a very happy family, and got on splendidly.

"Every year a big patch of bush was cleared up, and when I left home, there were more than four hundred acres of the farm under some sort of cultivation. Father and my three eldest brothers sometimes worked as hard as the hired men, and they all liked it; but Hugh and I, the two youngest boys, were, we thought, awfully abused by being sent to school, and afterward to Upper Canada College at Toronto. We made up for it all, though, in the Summer and Christmas holidays, as there was any quantity of fishing and hunting everywhere around our home.

"About six miles from our place lives Colonel Warwick, a half-pay officer, whose family is of exactly the same size as ours, and ever since coming to Canada we had dined and spent the evening with them on Christmas day and they with us on New Year day—and we always had great fun.

"Two years ago to-day, January first, 1851, the Warwicks—father, mother and nine children, big and little—came to us as usual; but when we sat down to dinner, our total number was only twenty-one, instead of twenty-two. The place at my mother's right hand was vacant, and she herself, though doing the honors gracefully, wore an air of troubled anxiety, which she could not wholly conceal, and which was more or less reflected by each face in our own family."

"Had one of your brothers or sisters died, then, Fred?" asked one of the men.

"No; that is, we hoped not. The trouble was that eighteen months before, in July, 1849, my eldest brother, Donald, longing for adventure and excited by wonderful reports from newly discovered gold-fields, had left home, bound for California, and not a word from or of him had yet reached us, beyond the mere information that he was to leave New York for Colon on the sixteenth day of the month as passenger on a sailing ship, the name of which he did not give. From Colon—now Aspinwall—he intended to cross the deadly

Isthmus to Panama and thence take ship on the Pacific for San Francisco.

"On the New Year day of 1850 his absence had thrown but a slight cloud on our jollity, as in those days there was no Panama Railway, and six or even nine months might well pass away without letters from him. But now another whole year had gone by, and even my bravely hopeful father had begun to feel alarmed; for it was not like true-hearted Donald to neglect his own people; and yet, if still alive, how was his long silence to be accounted for? We feared that, like so many hundreds of other gold-seekers, he might have perished in fever-stricken Panama, as he would, we thought, have certainly written if he had safely reached San Francisco.

"The grizzled old soldier, Colonel Warwick, tried hard to cheer us by his own reminiscences of mysteriously lost and happily refound comrades in India and elsewhere, and by truthfully reminding us of the many vicissitudes to which letters from California were then exposed. 'Why,' he said, 'the boy has probably written a half-dozen times; but, either in crossing the Isthmus, passing round Cape Horn, or coming by way of that wonderful overland Pony Express, the letters may every one have been lost. I've known far stranger things than that, in the way of missing mail matter, to occur among our fellows, even in easily reached and densely populated India.'

"For a year before leaving home, Donald had owned a magnificent Newfoundland dog, Prince by name. 'The Black Prince' we youngsters called him, not only on account of his color, but also because his chivalrous and daring character greatly resembled, in our estimation, that of the famous personage in English history for whom we had named him. Indeed, Prince had once saved his master's life, when the latter was one day, in an outlying field, suddenly attacked by a furious, half-wild bush bull. Hence Donald was so greatly attached to the creature that he had, notwithstanding the added expense, taken him along on his tedious journey, much to our regret, as we sorely missed the grand old fellow in all our outdoor sports.

"So, on this New Year day, all of us, even down to nine-year old Margery, thought constantly of the far-away pair. But the rites of hospitality could not be neglected; and by-and-by, stimulated by the purposed gayety of our visitors, all of us young folks joined, just in the gloaming, in a romping game of 'hide-and-seek.'

"At ordinary times our big, ten-room log house was lighted by home-made tallow candles, but on festive occasions my mother used sperm ones. Numbers of these were now burning, in addition to the great open fires, making all within-doors altogether too light for the proper enjoyment of our game; so, by unanimous consent, we agreed that the 'hiders' should have the privilege of the fast-darkening woodshed, stable and nearest barn.

"The play went merrily on for half-an-hour or so, each successive 'seeker' generally routing out the most cunningly concealed 'hiders' in no time. But then little Agnes Warwick so artfully hid herself that the 'seeker' of the moment, utterly failing to discover her, was finally obliged to call upon the whole crowd for assistance.

"High and low, up and down, through stable-lofts, between wood-piles, behind straw-stacks, inside the big fanning-mill, over grain-bins and under the barn, we hunted without success. Then, gathered in a cluster on the threshing-floor, we were about to give up and let the little mischief find herself, when, through the open door, into which the pale moonlight streamed, a dark body rushed, shot past us and sprang over into a nearly empty haymow, whence instantly came a great rustling and a series of inarticulate cries—from the now discovered Agnes—which sounded to us like those of fear and pain.

"'A bear! A bear!' screamed the elder Miss Warwick. 'A bear is killing the child!'—these brutes are quite plentiful in our neighborhood.

"'Pshaw!' exclaimed my brother Hugh, 'bears don't come out in Winter.'

"'No, nor they don't have long tails, either, I guess,' wisely observed little Margery.

"Recovering from our momentary astonishment, we young men and boys were in the act of rushing to the rescue, when out from the manhole of the mow crept little Agnes, laughing half hysterically and encircling with one arm the neck of a big black dog!

"'Why, it's Prince! Donald's Black Prince!' all of us simultaneously shouted, for now we plainly saw the peculiar, heart-shaped breast-spot which was the only speck of white on the glossy coat of our long lost friend.

"It really seemed as if the wise old fellow had stealthily watched our play until he found what the trouble was; and then, with deliberate purpose to surprise us, had dashed past without greeting, and, guided by his unerring nose, had speedily torn the hay off the form of his well-remembered playfellow—for pretty Agnes Warwick used to spend fully as much time at our home as at her own.

"Now, having so well succeeded in creating a sensation, Prince threw off all disguise and after hilariously jumping upon each of us in turn, gambolled, barked and frisked around in an ecstasy of delight, while we all started in a wild race to the house.

"Evidently, some one—perhaps with news of Donald—had arrived, for a strange sleigh stood before the open door, and as we neared the house, we could hear my father's voice ringing out in tones which did not sound like those of grief.

"'There's word from Donald! Come on,' yelled my brother, Archie, as he sprang to the leading place.

"The other sixteen of us followed, pell-mell, almost tumbling over each other in our eagerness, and burst like a cyclone into the big parlor. Then the old roof shook with our half frantic cheers; for there, in the centre of the room, stood Donald himself! He was brown as an Indian and bearded like—well, like any gold-digger, but was the same old Donald still, while clasped to his breast, with her arms about his neck, lay my dear little mother, softly crying in speechless joy."

Here poor Fred almost broke down, and not a homesick man of us all could trust himself to speak. Pres-

ently, however, the young fellow—he was only nineteen—went on:

"Boys—I—tell—you—this—was—'most—too—much for me. I'll never forget that time if I should live a thousand years. It seemed like getting my brother back from the grave itself. Some of us cried like babies, and even the stern old colonel himself had to pretend that the open door blew the fire-smoke into his eyes.

"At last we quieted down a little, and after the two hungry travellers—Black Prince and his master—had eaten a good dinner, Donald told us his story. It would take me all night to repeat it in full. Besides, I can't tell it as he did; so I'll just give you the marrow of it:

"On landing at Colon, he and all the other passengers had to pay forty dollars each for mule-hire, with a pair of big Mexican spurs thrown in for every rider, in order to get across the Isthmus. More than one-half of the crowd already had symptoms of the fever when they got to the city of Panama, and twenty-six poor fellows died there, while waiting a week for a Pacific Ocean ship.

"Donald was stricken down almost at once, and lay for three months between life and death in the house of Father Laporte, a kind French-Canadian priest, who took good care of him and his effects, and when he was able to dictate, wrote for him to my father, though neither that letter, nor three others, written from different places by Donald himself, were ever received—a quite common occurrence during the first two years of the California excitement.

"During the whole of his master's illness, Prince stuck close to him, though, as Father Laporte afterward related, nothing but the dog's own fierce courage and fidelity had prevented him from being stolen by covetous thieves.

"At last Donald got strong enough to sail for San Francisco, where he arrived after a five-weeks' voyage and in robust health. Here he wrote a long home-letter and, accompanied by Prince, went off at once to San Juan diggings. He had good luck from the very

first, and in eight months cleared, above all expenses, nearly eleven thousand dollars. Then, being no longer able to bear up under that awful homesickness which all of us are beginning to know so well, he pulled up stakes and started for home.

"He told us that often, while on the diggings, and in the city, too, he had been offered fifty ounces of gold for Prince, but that fifty times fifty could not have bought him—very fortunately for Donald himself; for on his journey from the mines to San Francisco he was waylaid one night by two Mexican tramps, and saved from robbery and death only through the dog's watchfulness and courage.

"It seems the vagabonds had concealed themselves in a clump of chaparral by the roadside, and were in the act of stealing out upon their intended victim, when sharp-eyed Prince sprang forward and bore one of them to the ground before he could use his murderous knife; then held him by the throat until Donald had bound him; while his villanous comrade, seeing the game was up, disappeared in the bush.

"Without further serious adventure, my brother had returned home by way of Callao, thence to Panama, then across the Isthmus again, and so, by an Atlantic steamer, to New York, where he sold his gold, all except a few specimen nuggets, for $17.10 per ounce—that being then the highest price for California gold.

"While he was telling his story, the noble old dog listened intently, and, I do believe, understood every word, as at the most striking passages he thumped the floor with his great tail in token of approval."

"You had a jolly time then, after all, eh, Fred?" said one of our fellows.

"Jolly! well, I should say so. Our New Year day, which began with anxious doubt and went along with forced gayety, ended in a regular jubilee. But Donald's story so excited me that I soon began to tease my parents to let me also go to the gold-fields. My father said I was too young, however; so I had to return to college, where I remained for seventeen months longer, and it was not until the beginning of the holidays, last

June, that I was allowed to leave, on condition that I should go, not to California, but to Australia, as both my parents knew that law and order are better enforced here than there.

"So I said good-by to my darling little mother and all the others. By this time I had begun to find that a voyage around the world was not quite so easy a matter as I had thought; but it was then too late to back out, and I got to New York just in time to secure a passage on the old *Revenue* with the rest of you fellows."

In the foregoing, I do not claim to have given the exact words of my chum; but he was a very precise-speaking young fellow, seldom indulging in digger-talk, and, having made copious notes in my diary at the time, I have reproduced very nearly his own language and related the facts exactly as they occurred—facts which can be certified to by many still surviving passengers on that voyage of the *Revenue*, Capt. Seth Crowell, some of whom are pretty sure to be readers of ROMANCE.

Feeling too greatly shocked by the tragic death of our comrades to remain longer on the Lodden, four of us—"Jack" Urquhart, Fred Ross, Joe Wells and I—started next day for Eagle Hawk gully, Bendigo; whence, after three weeks of profitable work, we went across country to Jim Crow Creek, as related by me in a former contribution to ROMANCE.

I may add that Ross, Wells and I, after many stirring adventures, got back to America all right, and that Jack Urquhart married a pretty English girl and remained in Australia.

The shadow of the guillotine hangs over this beautiful story by Anatole France, and yet it is anything but a sad one. It has been done into English for ROMANCE by Fannie A. Weston.

UNDER THE SOFA.

THE room was hung in pale blue silk; the Prayer from Orpheus was open on a spinet; the chairs had lyres for backs; a mahogany writing-desk; a white bed with its decoration in roses; painted doves in pairs along the cornice; the whole seemed to smile with a tender grace. The lamp shone softly, and the flickering fire-light filled the dusky corners as with palpitating wings. Seated before the writing-desk in a loose gown, her delicate neck inclined under the pale, magnificent aureole of her hair, Juliette is looking over old letters, which have lain, tied up with ribbons, forgotten in the drawers.

The stroke of midnight sounds; it is the sign of the merging of the old year into the new. The dainty clock, upon which a laughing, gilded love is perched, announces that the year 1793 is ended.

At the moment when the hands conjoin, a little phantom appears. A pretty child issuing from a tiny room adjoining, where he sleeps, comes to throw himself into his mother's arms and wish her a happy New Year.

"A happy New Year, Pierre, I thank you; but do you know what a happy year is?"

He thinks he knows, but she wishes to impress the lesson still deeper.

"A year is good, my darling, for those who have passed it without hate and without fear."

She kisses him and carries him back to the bed he has left, and then reseats herself before the desk. She gazes first at the flames glowing on the hearth and then at the letters, from which faded flowers are dropping, It costs her much to burn them, but it must be done,

because these letters, if discovered, would send to the guillotine him who wrote and her who received them. If she alone were in question, she would not destroy them, so weary is she of contending for her life; but she thinks of him, hunted, proscribed, denounced, at this very moment hiding in some hay-loft at the other end of Paris. It would take but a single one of these letters to track him out and give him over to death.

Pierre is snugly asleep in the next room, and the two servants have retired to the upper regions. The deep silence of the season of snow reigns without. The sharp, pure air quickens the flame in the fire-place. Julie is going to burn the letters, but it is a task she knows she cannot accomplish without deep and sad reflection. She is going to burn the letters, but not without reading them.

They are arranged in order, for Julie infuses everything pertaining to her with the exactness of her mind. Some, already yellowed, are dated three years back; and Julie, in the silence of the night, lives over again enchanted hours. Not a single page is consigned to the flames before the beloved syllables that cover it are ten times spelled.

The calm is profound around her. Occasionally, as the hours pass, she goes to the window and, lifting the curtain, sees in the silent darkness the spire of Saint Germain-des-Prés silvered in the moonlight; then she takes up again her work of slow and regretful destruction. And how can she refrain from drinking in for a last time these delicious pages? How can she give to the flames these dear lines without first engraving them forever on her heart? The calm is profound around her, and her soul is palpitating with youth and love. She reads:

"I see you when absent, Julie. I walk surrounded by the images my fancy creates. I see you, not motionless and cold, but warm, alive; always changing, always perfect. I draw around you in my dreams the most magnificent spectacles of the universe. How happy is he who is Julie's lover! All things charm him, because he sees her in them all. Loving her, he loves to live; he admires the

world that she illumines; he cherishes the earth that blooms under her footsteps. Love reveals to him hidden meanings in all that surrounds him. He understands the infinite forms of creation; they all picture forth Julie's image; he hears the innumerable voices of nature; they all murmur Julie's name. Enraptured, he lets his gaze float out upon the broad sea of daylight, knowing that the same radiance bathes Julie's face, like a divine caress thrown over the most perfect of human forms. To-night, the first stars will make him tremble; he will think, 'Perhaps she, too, is looking at them now.' He breathes her in in all the perfumes of the air. He could kiss the earth that bears her. . . . My Julie, if I must fall under the proscriber's axe, if, like Sidney, I must die in the cause of liberty, death itself cannot hold in the nether-world, where you are not, my unhappy shade. I will fly to you, my darling; often will my soul return to float around you."

She reads and dreams. The night is ending. Already a pale, gray streak shows under the curtains; it is the dawn. The servants have commenced their tasks; she wishes to finish hers. Were those voices she just now heard? No, the calm is profound around her.

The calm is profound, but it is because the snow deadens the sound of footsteps. Men are approaching; they are here; loud knocks shake the door.

She has not time to hide the letters, to close the desk. All that she can do, she does; she gathers up the papers in her arms and throws them under the sofa which has a deep valance around it. Some of the letters are scattered outside on the carpet; she shoves them under with her foot, seizes a book, and falls into an arm-chair.

The President of the District enters, followed by twelve patriots. He is a former chair-mender by the name of Brochet, whose limbs tremble as though with fever, and whose blood-shot eyes are perpetually rolling as though at sights of horror.

He signs to his men to guard the doors, and addresses Julie:

"Citizeness, we have just been informed that you are in correspondence with various agents of Pitt, and with

emigrants and conspirators in prisons. I come to seize your papers in the name of the law! You were designated to me a long time ago as an aristocrat of the most dangerous kind. Citizen Rapaix, who stands before you"—he pointed to one of his men—"has admitted that in the severe winter of 1789 you gave him money and clothing to corrupt him. Lenient magistrates, without proper public spirit, have spared you too long. But I am master now, and you shall not escape the guillotine. Give up your papers, citizeness."

"Take them yourself," said Julie, "my desk is open."

Sundry notices of births, deaths, or marriages, old bills, and business papers still remained in the desk, and Brochet examined them one by one. He turned them from side to side, and felt them as would a man uncertain of his ability to read, and at intervals ejaculated, "Bad! the name of the *ci-devant* king is not erased. This is bad, bad!"

Julie concludes from this that the search is to be a long, minute one. She cannot refrain from casting a furtive glance toward the sofa, and she sees the corner of a letter peeping out from under the valance like the white ear of a cat. At sight of this, her anguish suddenly ceases. The certainty that all is lost brings a tranquil assurance to her mind, and upon her face a calm quite like that of security. She is sure the men will see this point of paper that she sees, gleaming white upon the red carpet. It seems to force the eye toward it. But she does not know whether the discovery will come at once or later, and the doubt occupies and amuses her. She even, in this tragic moment, watches the patriots as they approach or turn from the sofa, as though their movements were part of a game.

Brochet, who has finished with the papers in the desk, becomes impatient, and declares that nothing shall prevent his finding what he seeks.

He overturns the furniture, examines the back of the pictures, and raps with his sword-hilt on the woodwork to discover possible hiding-places. He finds none. He removes the glass from the mirrors to see if anything is concealed behind. There is nothing.

During this time the men are tearing up some of the boards in the flooring; they swear that a worthless aristocrat shall not make game of good *sans-culottes*, such as they. But not one of them has seen the little white point peeping out from under the valance of the sofa.

They take Julie through the other rooms of the house and demand all the keys. They break up tables, smash the window-panes in fragments, rip open chairs and disembowel couches. And still they find nothing.

But Brochet has not yet given up; he returns to the bed-room.

"In the name of God! The papers are here—I am sure of it!"

He examines the sofa, declares it suspicious-looking and thrusts the whole length of his sabre through it five or six times. Still he finds no trace of what he is seeking, and with a frightful oath he gives his men the signal for departure.

He has reached the door, when, turning to Julie, with his fist extended toward her, he declaims:

"Tremble when you see me again! I am the sovereign people!"

He is the last one to pass out.

At last, they are gone. She listens to the sound of their footsteps dying out in the stairway. She is saved! Nor has her imprudence betrayed him! She runs with a gleeful laugh to embrace Pierre, who is sleeping as soundly as though the whole house had not been in turmoil around him.

. . . . . .

Julie shone for a time with considerable brilliancy under the Consulate; but in the midst of her splendor, she would often murmur at night sad secrets to the trees on the park. She was stronger to withstand the terrors of death than the trials of love.

Her husband became a baron and a prefect under the Empire, and little Pierre died, a colonel of *gendarmerie*, at Versailles in 1859.

This exciting story of the sea, of mutineers, of prize-ships and starvation, has such an air of veracity that it is impossible to doubt it. It is the work of William Laird Clowes.

THE DEAD SHIP.

THE following narrative is taken verbatim from a manuscript left by the late Geoffrey Pember, sometime master of the letter-of-marque *Misery*, who died at the age of ninety in 1798, and who lies buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's, at Shrewsbury.

In the month of January, 1762, being then in my fifty-fourth year and having followed the sea all my life, I obtained command of the letter-of-marque *Misery*, a ship of 500 tons burden, that mounted sixteen guns on the broadside and a long brass swivel on the quarter-deck, and that had been fitted out by some merchants of Bristol to cruise against the Spaniards in the West Indies. It was not without much labor that I got a crew, all the better men having been pressed for the King's service; and, when I did get one, I had no great cause to be pleased, for a more ruffianly and unruly set I never set eyes upon. Yet I had with me as master an old and tried shipmate, Warren Hodges; and there was also with me my dear son Humphrey, who seventeen years later was killed, lieutenant of the *Ruby*, at the gallant capture of the French frigate *La Prudente* off Gonaive. At the time of which I speak, he was no more than eighteen, yet he was so brave and determined a lad and so good a seaman that with him and Warren Hodges I thought to make shift to do my business and to manage my rabble in the forecastle.

It was on the 21st of the month that we weighed anchor and dropped down the river with the tide, and with a pleasant breeze from the north-east. There being then a convoy coming down channel, and bound for Jamaica, I lay to all the 22d and 23d to the southward of St. Mary's, and early on the morning of the 24th I sighted the King's frigate *Rainbow*, which

with the *Gosport* and *Biddeford* had under her charge not fewer than sixty sail of merchantmen. To my chagrin, the captain of the *Rainbow*, a young buck who, I make no doubt, was more at home in St. James's park than on his own quarter-deck, and who was scented like a French dancing-master, pressed nine of my best men; yet, there being then many Spanish frigates and ships-of-the-line off our coasts, I could not disdain the company of the King's ships, and was forced to bear with it, even though it cost me so dear. With them I sailed until February 9th, when, being, as nearly as I could reckon, in long. 40° W. and lat. 27°30′ S. (for, by cause of the foul weather, we had taken no observation for two days), a storm scattered the fleet, and we, with only three of the merchantmen still in sight, were driven by the force of the gale out of our course to the southward. The storm abated somewhat on the 11th, and we were enabled to bear up again for Jamaica; but my men having now no fear of the King's ships, put on from that instant a mutinous disposition, and soon began to carry themselves so outrageously toward me that I perceived they were minded to stick at nothing in order to seize the *Misery* and to shape her to their own ends. Being plainly assured of this, as well by my own sight and hearing as by the reports of my faithful servant, Richard White, a blackamoor, whom I had brought nine years before out of Guinea, I took counsel with my son and Warren Hodges to prepare for the worst. I caused the arm-chest to be removed into the great cabin, the door of which I fortified from within. I ordered the brass swivel on the quarter-deck to be kept loaded with a keg of bullets, so that I might be able to sweep all the deck forward. And I made Richard White sleep every night under the gun, with a dark lantern beside him and a match in his hand.

But these and the other provisions that I took were of no avail against the treachery of the crew; and, to add to my uneasiness, I had the mortification of finding that we lost sight one by one of the three remaining merchantmen, and that by the middle of the month we had but ourselves for company.

One morning, hearing a noise upon the forecastle, I ran upon deck. Warren Hodges, who had the morning watch, was not to be seen; but I could hear his voice raised in anger, and the voices of some of the crew threatening him with oaths. Returning to the cabin for a pistol and a hanger, I went forward, and found that the mutineers had seized both Warren Hodges and the blackamoor, and had already bound them and thrown them into the chains, where they lay crying lustily for help. I whipped out my hanger to cut the ropes with which they were bound; whereat a great man named Morton, the ringleader, as I now knew him to be, of the mutiny, stepped out from among the men and declared that, if I dared to interfere, I should pay the penalty with my life; that he and his friends had determined to seize the ship and to cruise with her on their own account against the Spaniards; and that I, for my part, might either stay where I was and serve under him, or take the consequences. Angered at the fellow's insolence, I raised my pistol with the intention of shooting him as he stood, but the powder flashed in the pan, and in an instant I was seized from behind, flung upon the deck, and bound as securely as Warren Hodges and the blackamoor. My first thought was for the safety of my dear son. I now had the mortification of seeing him led bound from the cabin, where, during all this time, he had been asleep, and with us he was put under close guard in the hold.

For a full week Morton came daily to us, seeking to persuade us to throw in our lot with his, but we steadfastly refused, and on the eighth day he came to us early with the news that, as we were but idlers in the ship, and as he could not spare men for our guard, he would send us adrift that morning and leave us to shift for ourselves. At noon, therefore, having lowered the yawl, they unbound us and ordered us over the side. So stiff were we from our long confinement, and so weak from lack of food—for the villains had gone near to starve us—that we could not but do their bidding; nor could we all of us do that without help from the mutineers, who nevertheless jeered at our sad condition

and mockingly wished us a pleasant voyage. In three hours we were out of sight of the ship, in an open boat, without either water, provisions, sails, oars, or compass, with a blazing sun above us, and with, as I made out, not less than two hundred leagues between us and the nearest land.

Warren Hodges had received a blow on the head at the first outbreak, and had ever since lain half-dazed, speaking little. In three hours, maddened, as I supposed, by the sun, he was a raving maniac, calling for water and desiring to throw himself overboard; and that night he died. Nor were any of us in much better plight, but by taking off our shirts, fastening them together, and dragging them in our wake, we fortunately collected a few small shell-fish, with which we stilled the worst pangs of hunger. By continually wetting our clothes also we lessened our terrible thirst. Nevertheless, Richard White, disdaining my counsel, drank some of the sea water on the second day; and on the fourth day died raving mad like Warren Hodges.

Now were we two, indeed, in a sorry way. Our strength had so diminished that we could barely raise ourselves in the boat; our throats were so parched that we could not speak above a whisper; our bodies were so ill-humored, as well from dirt and evil food as from the glare of the sun, that we were all over sores. At night we lay shivering with ague and praying for the day; by day we lay burning and longing for the night.

I had lost all hope of deliverance when, on the ninth day, I saw what I at first took for a bird's wing glistening in the sunlight far to windward. But, as I soon knew, it was a sail. My eyes were so weak and so clogged with salt that for a time I dared not trust them. Yet, as the strange ship came drifting rather than sailing right across our course, I could doubt no longer, and, with my heart almost bursting, I tried to tell the news to my son. But I could not speak. I could only touch him and point; and he, for his part, as I afterward heard from him, could neither speak nor see. With infinite trouble, I fashioned a little mast and sail from the thwarts of the boat and my shirt. This suf-

ficed to enable me to steer the boat, and in an hour, during which, thanks to God, and fears that the strange ship might yet escape us, struggled in my heart for mastery, we ran alongside, and made fast to a rope which was trailing overboard.

It was with much surprise that I found we were suffered to approach without being hailed, for I could perceive that our ship was a Spaniard; but even had they hailed us, we were in no condition to reply. Indeed, no sooner had I made fast than I fell back senseless in the boat, nor did I know more until darkness had set in, when the cold wind awoke me.

At first I thought that I was dreaming, and not until I had touched the great hull and watched it slowly rising and falling beside me on the moonlit water did I recollect and rightly understand what had happened. Even then it was some time before, do what I would, I could climb on board. When at length I did so, the ship seemed to be deserted. She was a big, high-pooped craft, such as the Spaniards term a galleon, and chiefly used for their rich traffic with the Indies, and although her masts were all standing and some of her sail was set, there was not a man to be seen. I walked forward, making a great noise with my feet, for I could not cry out. Then I walked aft, noticing the fine guns of brass and the new cordage, until I put my hand on the handle of the door of the great cabin, and opened it. Then, from weakness, I sank down on the threshold. There was no light within, and no sound. Even there I could hear the lap of the water against the ship's side. It was as if the whole galleon was asleep, save that I could distinguish no breathing and no motion of slumbering men. I had sunk down against a locker, and, stretching forth my hand, found that it was open. Within, to my great joy, was a bag of bread, which, with some small flasks of wine, I made no scruple of taking; and, as soon as I was again a little recovered, I returned, even before I had ministered to my own craving, to my son, who still lay without life in the boat alongside. He was so far gone that at first I could do no more than moisten his tongue and lips

with the wine; but in a short space he revived, and was able with my help to get on board. By this time our voices were restored to us, and no sooner were we on deck than we knelt down to thank God for the deliverance he had vouchsafed to us. Then, caring little whether we had fallen into the hands of friends or of foes, we dragged ourselves under the shelter of one of the quarter-deck guns, and there fell asleep from sheer weariness.

The sun was high when I again awoke; but the decks were as before. No one was at the helm; the sails flapped in the light air against the masts; and the ship drifted whither she would. I was still very weak, but some bread and a draught of wine strengthened me; and then I set about exploring the great vessel. Leaving my son, Humphrey, who yet slept, I went to the door of the cabin in which I had found the provisions. It was open, as I had left it the night before; and as I drew near, I perceived that a smell as of a charnel-house issued forth from it. Even before I entered I could see that on the deck within lay several bodies of dead men. Not knowing what to do, and stricken with horror, I halted. The nearest body to me, that of a tall and elderly man, had fallen from the bed in which it had lain, and moved from side to side with the slow roll of the ship. Close to it, on a kind of couch, was the body of a boy. Further aft were the bodies of three men, one of which was dressed in menial fashion, yet richly withal, as if its owner in life might have been servant to some great lord. Sick at heart, I entered, gently and reverently, at last. It was vain to search for any spark of life there. In certain of the other cabins were other bodies, and in the forecastle and on the lower deck a great store of them, thirty-seven in all; but there was not one living soul on board save us.

When I returned to my son Humphrey, I awoke him, and, finding him much refreshed, I told him—yet not without caution—of all that I had seen. The ship, I said, was stout and strong, and well found; but of the crew, some were clearly departed—for certain of the boats were lacking—and all that remained were dead.

And while we sat cleansing our sores and washing ourselves by the gun, we debated what were best to be done. Humphrey, who had seen but little of death, and was full of terror of it, was all for loading our own boat with what we could find, and for entrusting ourselves once more to the mercy of the sea; nor did I at first seek to dissuade the lad, for I feared lest the sickness which had, as it appeared, stricken down the crew, might now seize upon us; yet, seeing that we both were weak and unable, I was minded, if only for a day or two, to stay by the ship, that we might properly recover ourselves, ere we ventured abroad anew. And in this opinion he at length agreed. But, in the evening, feeling wonderfully strong again, I renewed my search about the ship; and so fine and beautiful a craft did she then show herself to me that I fell to doubting whether I could bring myself to leave her again. And when beneath the floor of the great cabin I found some chests of pieces-of-eight half broke open (I doubt not by those who had gone away in the boats), I determined that, so long as there might be hope of bringing so valuable a prize into port, I would remain in her. In this opinion also, when I had given a handful of pieces-of-eight into his keeping, my son agreed; and next day, after having passed the second night on deck for fear of the evil emanations from the dead, we set to work to rid the ship of the bodies and to cleanse the cabins and lower deck. That day I was able to take an observation, and to determine that we were then in long. 51 deg. 3 W. and lat. 40 deg. 2 N.; that is to say, in the full course of that current which is called the Great Gulf Stream, and which, running round the point of Florida, crosses the western ocean toward Ireland and the Shetlands. That day also, finding that my son's stomach was too weak for the work of the cabin, I set the lad at the helm, and so kept the ship before the wind, which blew from the south-west, yet so gently as scarce to ruffle the bosom of the sea.

By degrees I committed the bodies to the deep, and when the ship was, as I thought, clear, I burned tobacco, herbs, and flour of sulphur in all close places, and kept

the port-holes open to purify the foul air. Yet still, for some days, I found yet other bodies in divers holes and corners, whither, I suppose, the poor wretches had crept to die of the plague which had seized upon the vessel. The last that I found was in the lower hold among the bilge, but how it got there I never knew, nor could I guess, unless, perchance, the man in the madness of his fever had wandered hither unwittingly, and had been unable to return. In all there were three and fifty dead in the ship when we boarded her. When, as I afterward learned, she left the Havannah, she had three hundred and eleven souls in her, of whom two hundred and fourteen had died and had been buried in the sea; whereupon thirty-five of the rest had fled in the boats, leaving the residue to their fate. Those who remained were all so sick and so weakly that they could bury but eleven of their number as they died. The others stayed where they were, until the ship was as we found it. As for those who fled, they were never again heard of, and, I doubt not, they perished either of the sickness or of hunger and privation.

The ship carried when we found her only her fore-staysail, mizen, and fore and main topsails, and I dared not hoist more, knowing not what might befall us if the fine weather should fail. We did not, therefore, make much progress, and it was seven weeks ere we were in the longitude of Cape Clear. During all that time the weather held, and although the wind shifted many times, it never blew hard, a thing which in these latitudes and in the early part of the year seemed to me so marvellous that I could not but look upon it as the work of Providence. For, had a gale sprung up, we could have done nothing to save the ship. My son Humphrey and I never were together in the cabin or below; we kept watch in turn; we ate our food alone; and we made shift to do with so little sleep that I have often since wondered that men so weak did not sink under the load of deprivation and anxiety.

Off the Old Head of Kinsale we sighted a smack, the master of which ran alongside, after we had put out our colors, and asked for the news. Persuading him

to come on board, I learned that he belonged to Castletown, a fishing village in the Bay of Bantry, in the kingdom of Ireland, and, being taken by the honesty of his countenance, I concluded with him and his men to ship with me as far as Plymouth, whither I had made up my mind to take the galleon, for I would not trust myself in the Channel as we were, seeing that, even if I had not chanced upon bad weather, I should have been at the mercy of the first King's cruiser that might choose to take me in tow, upon the plea that I could not manage the ship; and I had no mind to share my prize with all the world. The Irishmen therefore, to the number of six, came on board, upon my engagement that upon arriving at Plymouth I would pay to each of them one hundred guineas, and to the master two hundred for his pains, which engagement I most faithfully observed. And so, with their smack in tow, we made our way up Channel, and, without further adventure, dropped anchor on April 21st in Plymouth Sound, very weary of our voyage, yet happy withal in having come so well out of it.

Upon anchoring we caused no small commotion in the port, no ship of so great a burden having yet been taken since the beginning of the war. Nor were there many finer ships even in the King's navy. But the commotion grew greatly when, the officers of the port having boarded us and made an examination of the galleon, it was known—which I myself had not till that moment suspected—that we had in her bullion and pieces-of-eight to the value of £283,000, besides a costly cargo of tobacco and other products of the West Indies.

Rear Admiral his Royal Highness the Duke of York himself paid me the honor of a visit, coming in his barge from the *Princess Amelia;* and a week later I was commanded to attend upon King George, who was pleased most graciously to offer my son Humphrey a commission in the Navy, and me the honor of a knighthood for what he deigned to call our unequalled exploit of taking and bringing home the galleon. As for the knighthood, I had no mind for it; although the *N. Senora del Carmen* provided me with money enough

worthily to support that dignity. As for the commission, Humphrey thankfully accepted it, and afterward, as I have said, fell honorably in his country's service. Poor lad! I have often wished since that he had refused the commission and I had accepted the knighthood; for then it might have happened that he would have lived to inherit the wealth which is but a sorry burden to a childless old man.

The *Misery* never again anchored in an English port, after getting rid of us. Morton, the leader of the mutineers, cruised with some success for two or three months among the islands. He took a Spanish brig, the *S. Isidro*, and several smaller vessels; but was at last chased by the Spanish frigate *Thetis*, and, to avoid capture, ran ashore. The crew being unable to reach the land, by reason of the surf, were taken off by the frigate's boats and made prisoners. A fortnight later, on June 2d, the *Thetis*, after a sharp action, was captured by the English frigate *Alarm*, Captain James Alms, which formed part of Admiral Sir George Pocock's fleet destined for the reduction of the Havannah. The English prisoners on board the *Thetis* endeavored to prove that I, as well as they, had been engaged with the Spaniard; but the affair of the *Misery* having by this time been reported to Sir George from England, he, on the day after the capitulation of the town, hanged every one of the pirates on board his flagship the *Namur*. This I learned from Captain the Hon. A. J. Hervey, who was sent home in the *Dragon* with despatches, and who on his passage had the good fortune to take a French ship valued at £30,000. He was so polite as to bring the intelligence in person; and I am not ashamed to say that I was very pleased to know that the rascals had got their deserts.

Zuma was one of those delightful Indians, of whom we read in "Ramona," and other books of the same class, but who are said to be rare in real life, either in North or South America. Her thrilling story was told by Madame De Genlis, and has been translated for ROMANCE by Mary E. Griffith. It is not intended for the perusal of those who consider the discovery of quinine a curse, instead of the blessing which it is called by the author.

ZUMA.

TOWARD the middle of the seventeenth century, the animosity of the Indians against the Spaniards still existed in all its energy; traditions only too faithful preserved among this oppressed and down-trodden people the frightful remembrance of the cruelty of their conquerors. They were conquered, but not submissive.

At this time a Viceroy, more cruel than any of his predecessors, filled the measure of their hate. His Secretary, a hard and avaricious man, hated even more than his master, suddenly died, and it was universally believed that he had been poisoned by the Indians. It was well known that they were acquainted with the most deadly poisons, and more than once they had been convicted of using them, but neither torture nor death could make them confess their guilt.

In the mean while the Viceroy was recalled, and in his place the Count de Cinchon was appointed. The Count, gifted with the most amiable qualities, and with every virtue that could conciliate the mind and win the heart, had just married a young and charming wife.

The Countess was anxious to accompany her husband, but, fearing the hate and perfidy of the Indians, he decided to leave her in Spain. The thought of her husband's exposure to such peril, however, determined the Countess to follow him to the New World. She took with her several ladies, who were to compose her Court at Lima. Among them was her dearest friend, Donna Beatrice.

The Indians, delighted to be rid of their Viceroy,

were no better disposed toward his successor; he was a Spaniard, and consequently they expected from him only injustice, greed, and tyranny. In vain they were told that the Count de Cinchon was humane and just; they repeated, "He is a Spaniard." This word to them said all that the most energetic hate could express. It was evident that the conquerors had failed to impress upon the natives the sublime moral of religion; they had been induced to practise a few external observances, but in their hearts they cherished all of their old superstitions and their idolatry.

The Spaniards little suspected the secret vengeance which the Indians, in their misery, cherished. They had been forced to give up to their oppressors their gold and precious stones, but they still retained their greatest treasures, in the wonderful antidotes against poison which Providence had given them, and, above all, in the bark of the quinquinna tree, of the properties of which they alone knew the secret, and which they had engaged by the most solemn oaths, frequently renewed, never to reveal.

Since the early days of slavery the Indians had preserved a kind of interior government; they appointed chiefs, whose duty it was to assemble their people from time to time in some wild place, inaccessible to Europeans, where each renewed his vows of secrecy and hate of the Spaniards. The Indians outside the city had far more freedom than those engaged on the public works, or those in the service of the Viceroy's palace, and they never failed to attend the midnight assemblies, which they regarded as their sole resource against tyranny.

Their principal chief (for there were several) was Ximeo, a man naturally noble and generous, but from continual brooding over the wrongs of his people, his heart had closed to every sweet and tender emotion. Ximeo had one son, named Mirvan, who had inherited his father's nobility of mind, as well as his hatred of the Spaniards; he had married Zuma, the belle of the environs of Lima, and they had one child, a boy two years old.

Another chief, Azan, was second only to Ximeo in his influence over the Indians. Azan was cruel and vindictive; no virtue tempered the fury with which he always seemed animated. These two chiefs had a most illustrious origin, and were descended from the royal race of Incas.

A few days after the arrival of the new Viceroy, Ximeo appointed for the following night a meeting on the hill of the "tree of health," as they designated the quinquinna tree, and when they were all assembled he said: "Friends, a new tyrant is to reign over us, unhappy children of the Sun, who are forced to envelop ourselves in darkness in order to renew the oaths of a just vengeance! Let us repeat around the 'tree of health' the terrible formula which engages us forever to conceal our secrets."

In a loud, firm tone Ximeo then cried: "We swear never to discover to the Europeans the divine virtues of this sacred tree, the sole treasure which is left us! Woe to the faithless and perjured Indian who, seduced by fear or weakness, would reveal this secret to the destroyers of his gods, of his sovereigns, and of his country! Woe to the coward who would give this precious possession to the barbarians who have enslaved us, whose ancestors have burned our temples and our cities, who have usurped our lands, and who have shed the blood of our fathers, after making them suffer unheard-of tortures! Let them keep the gold which they covet, but let us reserve this gift from heaven! If a traitor be found among us, let us swear to pursue him, and to destroy him, though he be our father, our brother, our son! Let us swear, if he be married, to pursue his wife and children, if they have not already denounced him, and to sacrifice them, that his race may become extinct. Friends, do you all renew these oaths which your forefathers made, and which you have pronounced so often?"

"Yes, yes!" shouted the Indians. "We swear to keep these secrets with inviolable fidelity and to suffer, if necessary, the most frightful torments and death, rather than to reveal them."

The Vice-queen, on her arrival at the gate of Lima,

was met by a crowd of young Indian girls, carrying baskets of flowers. Zuma was their leader, and the Countess was so struck with her beauty, her grace, and the lovely expression of her face that, a few days after, the young Indian was appointed to the service of the palace, and later to that of the Countess's person. This favor seemed most imprudent to Donna Beatrice, whose love for the Vice-queen made her listen only too willingly to the stories of the perfidy of the Indians. She not only believed all that was told her, but in her anxiety she conceived the greatest aversion to Zuma, which became stronger when it was found impossible to prejudice the Countess against her. The Vice-queen daily grew more fond of the object of so much calumny and injustice. Zuma, on her side, had the tenderest affection for the Vice-queen, but in order to avoid disagreeable scenes, she kept in her own rooms unless the Countess required her presence.

In the mean time, the Viceroy spared nothing in his endeavor to win the confidence of the Indians; but they had seen many Viceroys in the beginning of their reigns display the same amiability and justice, so that the real goodness of the Count made no impression. It was looked upon as duplicity, or as weakness caused by the terror which the Secretary's sudden death had inspired.

The Countess had been in Lima four months, when her health began to fail. At first it was attributed to the heat of the climate, but her sufferings increased daily, so that the greatest anxiety was felt; then she was suddenly seized with a violent fever. Every known remedy was used without effect. The distress of Donna Beatrice knew no bounds; she questioned the physician who had accompanied them from Spain, and he, feeling his skill baffled, spoke mysteriously, and implied some extraordinary cause. His manner, his reticence, gave Beatrice the horrible idea that her friend was dying of a slow poison. From that moment she knew no repose. Though she carefully concealed her suspicions from the Countess, and even from the Count, it was impossible to do so from the two ladies-in-waiting, who strengthened them. But who could

have committed this awful crime? No other than Zuma; Zuma, who entered the apartments of the Vice-queen at all hours. But after having been treated with so much kindness and affection by the Countess, how could she commit such an atrocity? Zuma was "hypocritical, vain, ambitious," said the envious. In short, she was an Indian, and familiar with the darkest crimes.

During all these agitations, Zuma thought only of the Vice-queen, whom she loved with the sincerity of a pure and grateful heart. She was deeply grieved that, although she knew of an infallible cure for the fever which was consuming her mistress, it was impossible to give it to her. Zuma knew only too well the terrible oaths by which the Indians had bound themselves never to reveal the secret. If only her own life had depended upon her speaking, she would not have hesitated for a moment; but this revelation would devote her husband and her child to certain death. Moreover, Ximeo, in order to assure himself of her discretion, had taken her little one as a hostage and placed him in the hands of the cruel Azan.

In the mean while the invalid grew worse; the fever, which had somewhat abated for a while, returned with renewed violence, and the physician admitted that he feared the Countess would not be able to resist the disease. Consternation was universal in the palace. The Vice-queen, fully aware of her condition, showed the greatest courage and piety. She received the Sacrament, bade her friends farewell, and commended to her husband the happiness of the Indians, especially that of her dear Zuma. These duties performed, she calmly awaited death. Zuma, whose health had failed sensibly during the past three months, on witnessing this pathetic scene, was overcome, and that very evening was taken with the same disease of which the Countess was dying, the tierce fever.

Alarmed at her condition, Mirvan, with the consent of the Indians, secretly carried to his wife the precious powder which was to cure her; but only one dose, which he was to renew each day. Zuma received in the morning the first, which she was to take in the

evening. When she was alone, she looked at the powder; her tears flowed and, raising her eyes to Heaven, "Great God!" she cried, "it is Thou who inspirest me! I can save her only by sacrificing myself; my part is taken. I shall not reveal the secret; besides, they will not suspect such devotion, and they will attribute the recovery of my dear mistress to the medicines of the physician. I shall expose neither Mirvan nor my son, and I shall not have betrayed our oaths. I shall die, but she will live. Of what importance is the life of poor Zuma? How much more precious that of this child of Heaven, the generous benefactress of the poor slave! Have I not just now heard her failing voice pray for the cruel Indians who leave her to die? Oh! my dear mistress! Amid the shadows of death thou hast not forgotten thy faithful Zuma. I have heard thee pronounce her name and bless it! Yes, I swear by the sacred light of the Sun, I swear to save thee!"

Zuma then carefully wrapped up the precious Quinquinna powder, placed it in her bosom, and considered the means by which she might enter the cabinet where the medicines of the Countess were kept. She had no idea of the horrible suspicions formed against her, nor that precautions had been taken to keep her, as well as all the other Indians, from this room. She believed that, since the Vice-queen's illness, the Spanish ladies reserved to themselves exclusively the service of the interior, through zeal and jealousy, or by one of those customs which they called etiquette. She decided to go into this cabinet in the evening, when she would find only one attendant, who would probably be asleep; in the contrary case, she would say that her anxiety forced her to come to make inquiries of the invalid's state. At the same time, wishing to find out if it would be possible to enter without passing through the apartment of the Countess, she descended into a long corridor, which she carefully examined; she saw that a little door opened into this corridor, just as she had imagined, and that the key was in the lock. She made up her mind to enter in the night on this side, and then she returned to her room.

All of Zuma's movements were carefully watched, and Donna Beatrice was told that in the morning Mirvan had visited his wife, leaving her apartment under great excitement—that later Zuma had descended the stairs, and, going through the corridor, had carefully examined the doors, stopping finally at the cabinet; then she had hastily returned to her room. Beatrice instantly divined that Zuma intended to slip into the cabinet in the evening. The women-in-waiting were ordered to watch the moment when the young Indian left her chamber, to leave the cabinet empty, and the key in the door. Then Beatrice went to inform the Viceroy. Without adopting her suspicions, he was nevertheless very much agitated, and agreed to conceal himself with her to watch further developments.

During the evening, Beatrice was told that Zuma was stealthily coming down the staircase in the dim light. The watchers quickly concealed themselves. Presently they heard the door of the cabinet softly open and Zuma appeared. She was pale and trembling, walking slowly and with great effort. She first listened at the door which opened into the apartment of the Countess. All was quiet. Then Zuma approached the table on which stood a glass containing the medicine of the Countess; into this she emptied the quinquinna powder. Immediately the horrified Viceroy sprang into the cabinet, crying, "Wretch! what have you done? What have you put into the glass?"

At this appearance, and upon hearing this question in such a frightful voice, the terror-stricken Zuma fell, saying, "I am lost." She had fainted. They carried her to her room. The Count and Donna Beatrice decided that they would conceal the intended crime from the Vice-queen. "She would ask pardon for this monster," said Count de Cinchon, "and nothing on earth would make me grant it. An example is necessary, and I will make it."

The report was instantly spread through the palace and the city that Zuma was accused of having attempted to poison the Vice-queen. That same evening she was taken to prison.

Mirvan, on hearing the report, went to find Azan. "You have my son in your power," said he. "At least promise me that, if we guard the secret faithfully, you will after our death give up the child to my father."

"I swear it," replied Azan, "but be assured that the least indiscretion will cost him his life."

"We shall know how to die," said Mirvan.

He then left the fierce Indian, and voluntarily gave himself up as a prisoner. He had at once divined Zuma's intention, but he could justify her only by giving up their child to the rage of the cruel Azan. He resolved therefore to die with his unhappy wife.

At daybreak the Council assembled to examine and judge the prisoners. The doors of the great hall were opened, and it was announced to the Indians that they were permitted to enter. They came in great numbers with their secret chiefs, Ximeo, Azan and Thamir. Mirvan and Zuma were led in, both of them loaded with chains. Zuma, on seeing Mirvan, cried out, "Oh, he is not guilty! He had no share in what I did. He was entirely ignorant of my purpose."

"Stop, Zuma," interrupted her husband. "Thy death is certain. Canst thou think of preserving my life? I am not accused, but I share thy fate. Zuma, let us die with courage, and our child will live."

Zuma comprehended the true sense of these words and said nothing.

The examination began. Zuma could not deny the act which both Beatrice and the Viceroy had witnessed. She was asked from whom she had received the powder which she put into the draught.

"She received it from me," said Mirvan.

Zuma denied this, affirming anew that her husband was ignorant of her intention.

"And what was your intention?" they demanded.

"It was not to poison the Vice-queen."

"Why then did you use the powder? Did you believe that you were using a salutary remedy?"

At this question Zuma trembled. Her eyes met those of the savage Azan, whose threatening glance

filled her heart with terror. In imagination she saw him murdering her child.

"No, no!" said she with a vacant look. "No, I cannot say that it was a salutary remedy."

"It was poison then? You confess it."

"I confess nothing."

"But you must answer."

"I can only be silent."

Then Ximeo came forward and placed himself between the husband and wife, saying: "Let them put me in chains also; I will die with my children."

"Oh! my father, live for our little one!" exclaimed Mirvan and Zuma together.

But Ximeo persisted.

The judges had received orders not to use torture nor to seek accomplices. They removed Ximeo, and led the unfortunate pair back to prison. The physician of the Countess was examined; he declared that the Vice-queen's malady had resisted the most powerful remedies, that it was attended by the most extraordinary symptoms, so that he could not avoid having suspicions; that the action of Zuma, leaving no doubt of the atrocity of her design, had confirmed his opinion that this wicked slave had been giving the Countess a slow poison; and that, later, finding herself excluded from the service of the chamber, and fearing that the youth of the Vice-queen and the care with which she was guarded would triumph over a slow poison, she had endeavored to consummate her crime by a strong dose. At this evidence the judges shuddered with horror, and at once condemned the prisoners to be burned at the stake that very day at noon.

They were brought back into the hall to hear their sentence. Mirvan showed an heroic firmness. Zuma threw herself at his feet, saying, "I am thy destroyer! That is my only grief! Oh! forgive me!"

"Stop!" he replied. "Accuse only the cruelty of our judges! Console thyself, Zuma. The tyrants who condemn us deliver us from a frightful yoke. In a few hours we shall no longer be their slaves."

These words moved even the hard heart of Azan.

"Mirvan!" he cried, "have no fear for thy son; he shall be dearer to me than if he were my own."

It was nine o'clock in the morning; orders were given to prepare the stakes. The Vice-queen was dying; the physician informed the Viceroy that it was impossible for the Countess to endure a third attack of fever. The Count, in the depths of despair, could not think of mercy.

The Count, unwilling to remain in Lima during the execution, rode out to a country-house a few miles from the city, intending to return in the evening.

The unhappy Ximeo in vain revolved in his mind a thousand projects to save Mirvan and Zuma. He wished to consult with his friends, but during the whole morning the Indians were so strictly watched that there was not even a possibility of conversing in secret with Azan or Thamir. Soon a proclamation ordered all the Indians who were in Lima to attend the execution. They were unarmed; the Spanish guard was doubled, and surrounded the pile; besides, two hundred soldiers were to escort the unfortunate victims. There was nothing but submission, and Ximeo, past hope, prayed for courage to throw himself into the burning pile with his children.

While the whole excited city was waiting for this frightful spectacle, the Vice-queen was weaker and more miserable than ever. The agitation of those around her had been extreme since six o'clock, and she was at last struck by it; she saw clearly that Beatrice was concealing something from her. Beatrice often left the room to gain composure, and during one of these periods of absence the Countess insisted upon an explanation, until one of the women-in-waiting gave an account of everything, adding that Zuma and Mirvan, far from denying their guilt, had gloried in it.

The surprise of the Countess was only equalled by the horror which the frightful recital inspired her. "O, Infinite Mercy!" she cried, "I invoke Thee with more confidence than ever!"

She at once ordered an open litter to be prepared. The women wrapped her in a long muslin robe, and

notwithstanding the tears and expostulations of the Spanish ladies and of Beatrice, who had hastened to her, the Countess was laid on the litter, and carried by four slaves. A fifth held over her a large parasol. Lying thus, her face covered with a white veil, she gave the order to convey her to the place of execution.

Twelve o'clock sounded. The doors of the prison were opened, and Mirvan and Zuma came out, loaded with chains. Zuma, scarcely able to sustain herself, leaned on the arm of a priest, and was attended by two soldiers. An immense crowd pressed forward to see her. In this multitude she saw Azan holding her little child in his arms. At this sight she uttered a despairing cry, a mother's cry, which resounded in the depths of every heart, and summoning all her strength, she extricated herself from the priest and the soldiers, and darting toward Azan, she embraced her son.

"Zuma," said Azan softly, "be strong, courageous. Remember that your death will be a vengeance, and that it makes our secret still more inviolable."

"No vengeance!" replied Zuma bitterly. "Oh! if I only could have saved the Vice-queen!"

She could say no more; the soldiers again surrounded her; and again they took up the line of march.

It was only three hundred paces to the place of execution. A mournful trumpet announced the approach of the victims; the top of the pile, which was formed of resinous wood, was set on fire.

At this sight, Zuma trembled with horror; the remembrance of her husband and child gave place to stupor; she thought only of her near destruction; she saw only inevitable death under the most frightful aspect; strength left her, her frozen blood no longer circulated in her veins; her face turned a deadly pallor, and without losing consciousness she fell into the arms of the priest, who, notwithstanding her vague protestations, continually exhorted her to repent.

"Zuma," said Mirvan, "our death will not be painful. Look at those whirls of smoke. We shall be stifled in a moment."

"Oh!" replied Zuma in a smothered voice, "I see only fire, only those awful flames!"

However, they were advancing, and each step that brought Zuma nearer to her last moment increased her unconquerable terror. Now they saw distinctly the Indians, sullen and terror-stricken, ranged around the pile, and bearing in sign of mourning great branches of cypress. The guard of Spanish soldiers surrounded the Indians.

Suddenly in the distance cries were heard. A horseman appeared riding at full speed, and shouting, "Stop the execution! the Vice-queen commands it! She follows me."

All waited. Zuma, with hands and eyes uplifted, prayed for strength, but her mind, weakened by terror, could feel no hope. At last the litter of the Vice-queen was seen; her bearers, urged by her, quickened their steps; they soon reached the unhappy pair; the Spanish guard hastened to range themselves around the Vice-queen; the Indians approached and formed a half-circle opposite to her; then the Countess, raising her veil, revealed a countenance pale and languid, but full of a more than earthly sweetness.

"I have not," said she, "the happy privilege of granting pardon, but I am sure of obtaining it from the goodness of the Viceroy. While waiting, I take under my protection these two unfortunate ones. Let their irons be broken. Let them extinguish this frightful pile, which never should have been kindled had I known of it earlier."

At these words all the Indians, throwing down their cypress-branches, made the air ring with cries of "Long live the Vice-queen!" Ximeo rushed from the crowd exclaiming, "Yes! she shall live!"

Zuma fell on her knees. "All-powerful God! finish Thy work!" she prayed.

The Vice-queen invited Mirvan and Zuma to attend her, and she returned to the palace, followed by the immense crowd, who enthusiastically blessed her for her mercy and goodness. As soon as they arrived at the palace, the Vice-queen was laid on her bed, and

she ordered Mirvan and Zuma to place themselves on either side. Fatigue and emotion had so exhausted her strength that she believed herself to be dying. She extended one hand to Mirvan, and the other to Zuma, who received them kneeling, and bathed them with tears. Beatrice, unable to endure so harrowing a sight, begged that the two Indians might be removed and guarded in the next apartment.

"No, no," said the Countess, "I answer for them, and I answer before the Supreme Arbiter who will judge us all! Leave them here. They are going to open the gates of Heaven for me."

"Great God!" said Beatrice. "To see you in the arms of these monsters who have poisoned you!"

"Where could I be better at this moment?" replied the Vice-queen. "I should feel in the arms of friendship only vain regrets, but these trembling hands which I press in mine, strengthen my courage; the sight alone of these unfortunates fills my heart with a calm sense of security."

"Oh! my benefactress!" said Zuma, "if Heaven betray my last hope, they will see if the unhappy Zuma loved you! No, I shall not be able to survive you!"

At these words, Beatrice exclaimed, "Detestable hypocrisy!"

"Do not insult them," interrupted the Countess. "They repent; see their tears flow! Zuma," she added, "you, whose lovely face indicates a heavenly mind; you, whom I have loved so well—could I cherish the slightest resentment against you? I look upon you both as the instruments of my eternal happiness. I pardon you with all my heart! May you be able to turn to religion with the same sincerity! I have sent a courier for my husband, who will, I know, confirm me in my position."

Zuma, almost beside herself, was about to speak, perhaps to reveal a part of the secret which weighed upon her far more than when she had only her own life to protect, when an extraordinary uproar was heard in the court of the palace. An instant later, the Countess distinguished the voice of her husband. She

ordered the door of her apartment to be opened, crying, "Pardon, pardon, for the criminals."

"They are your deliverers," said the Viceroy as he entered. Every one was transfixed with astonishment. The Viceroy held in his arms a young child. Zuma uttered a cry of joy; it was her little son. The Count laid the child in her arms and threw himself at her feet. Ximeo followed him, and addressing Mirvan, said, "My son, thou canst speak, by the consent of all our people. The secret is revealed. We have all taken the powder in the presence of the Viceroy, and he has taken some himself before bringing it here."

At these words, Zuma pressed her child to her heart, returning thanks to Heaven. Mirvan embraced his father; the Countess asked a thousand questions. The Viceroy rapidly related all that the Indians had revealed to him.

"Great God!" cried the Vice-queen, throwing her arms around Zuma, "this angelic creature, who was sacrificing herself for me, they were going to burn alive! When she was doing an action as sublime as touching, they were accusing her of an unparalleled crime!"

"The terrors of this heroic pair for their child's life," added the Viceroy, "made them, with invincible firmness, endure shame, ignominy and the prospect of a frightful death."

"Ah!" said Zuma, "the Vice-queen did more. She believed us monsters of ingratitude and wickedness, and yet she protected and delivered us!"

"She is to receive, as well as you, the reward of so many virtues; you are to cure her! Here are two doses of the beneficent powder, one for the Vice-queen, and one for Zuma."

While speaking, the Viceroy himself mixed the quinine with water in two cups. Zuma drank the first, and the Countess asked to receive from her the life-giving medicine.

The Vice-queen, already revived by joy and hope, received with delight the embraces of her husband, of Beatrice and of the happy Zuma; she lavished the

sweetest caresses upon Zuma's child, and promised from that hour to be his second mother.

Beatrice and all the Spanish ladies surrounded Zuma. Beatrice passionately kissed her hand, that beneficent hand which she had accused of committing an awful crime!

In the midst of the enthusiasm, the Viceroy led Mirvan and Zuma to a balcony which overlooked the broad street filled with Indians and Spaniards. "Behold," said he, pointing to Mirvan and Zuma, "the victims of gratitude and of the sanctity of oaths! Indians! their sublime virtues, and those of the Vice-queen have made you renounce a hate only too natural. You alone could release yourselves from the cruel vow made through vengeance; you have done so. You have become the benefactors of the old world! To make you happy is not only for us hereafter a duty of humanity, but one of gratitude; it shall be fulfilled. Indians, all of you in this memorable assembly,—Indians, you are free; such sentiments make you worthy to become the equals of your conquerors! Enjoy this glory. It is virtue that gives you liberty. Love your sovereign; be faithful to him. Lands shall be distributed among you. Make the 'tree of health' flourish there, and in cultivating it remember that it is to you the whole world will owe this gift of the Creator."

This address excited universal enthusiasm, and the Viceroy, desiring to end the day with the triumph of Zuma, caused her to be magnificently dressed, and placed in a palanquin, with all the court ladies in attendance, and the Vice-queen's guard of honor to accompany her. A mounted herald preceded the cortége, crying, "Behold Zuma, the wife of the virtuous Mirvan, and the deliverer of the Vice-queen!"

Zuma, reclining on cushions of cloth-of-gold, with her child beside her, held in her hand a branch of the "tree of health."

In this manner she passed through the principal streets of Lima, amid the acclamations of the people.

When she returned to the palace, after an affecting interview with the Vice-queen, she was conducted to a

beautiful apartment, newly prepared for her and her husband, with attendants to serve them; for from henceforth they were to be treated as the most intimate, the dearest friends of the Countess.

In the evening, the city was illuminated, and in the court of the palace and in the gardens tables sumptuously laden were prepared for the Indians.

The fever left the Vice-queen almost immediately; and at the end of eight days she was rapidly recovering health and strength.

In the very place where the fatal pile had been laid, the Viceroy raised an obelisk of white marble, on which was inscribed in letters of gold:

TO ZUMA
THE FRIEND AND DELIVERER OF THE VICE-QUEEN,
AND THE BENEFACTOR
OF THE OLD WORLD.

Those who enjoy humor should read this ingenious tale of the pranks of a monkey. It is from *Temple Bar*.

THE MAJOR'S MONKEY.

When I, a very young subaltern, first joined my regiment (the Royal Manx Fusileers), the depot had been for some six months stationed at the delightful town of Ballynoggin, County Longford, Ireland.

I suppose my brother-officers had by that time contrived to exhaust all the resources of the neighborhood in the way of amusement, for on my arrival I found them reduced to three topics of conversation. First, snipe-shooting—a bog with a bird in it lying within reach. Second, the sayings and doings of the three Misses McCran; dazzling beauties, daughters of the local solicitor, who kept a "car'ge" and resided in a stucco villa with "Castellamare" painted on the little green gate, on which the manly forms of two or more of the Royal Manx were generally to be seen lounging—in conversation with the lovely Ger'ldine or Norah. Third, Major Marillier's monkey, and why he kept it.

The snipe became a bore now and then; one's interest in Ger'ldine's bewitching Irishisms or Norah's conquests might even flag occasionally; but the mention of Congo's name or of his latest iniquity brought excitement into our flattest moments directly.

Congo was a beautiful little creature, with long, soft fur, dark face and paws, and gentle, mournful eyes, the temper of a wild cat, and the morals of an imp of darkness. He was supposed to reside in a house, made of a wine-case, in the room of Carmody, the Major's servant; but except for the purpose of secreting his plunder in the straw, never was found there by any chance.

Every device that the mind of man could conceive, and Carmody hit upon a fresh one once a week at least, failed to secure him. He bit through leather and rope, untied knots, picked locks, dislocated chains and always

ended by flying like a demon-spider, up and down every passage and staircase in the place—Carmody swearing in his wake—till he gained some coign of vantage whence it was impossible to dislodge him.

To appreciate the situation one should have known the Major.

He was a sedate and dignified personage, about forty, very quiet and rather precise and "old-maidish" in his ways. I always suspected that he considered himself created by nature to be the regular pattern of the British officer and gentleman, and intended his dress, demeanor and conversation to be instructive studies for us youngsters—each was so perfect in its way. I can't imagine why we didn't detest him. I think we were rather proud of him and considered him a credit to the regiment. He was a thoroughly good, kind-hearted fellow *au fond*, and it was generally understood that he could if he chose do everything better than anybody else. He didn't often choose, and generally held aloof from our sports and pastimes, not only refusing to enter his horse for our steeplechases, but actually declining to lend him to Miss Norah McCran for the same occasion.

His dress was a study of cut and color, from the parting of his hair to the toes of his boots; but I think his rooms impressed me most—such a combination of military precision with feminine prettinesses; trophies of warlike weapons; lace flounces to his shelves and chimney-board; tiger-skins, crewel-work, antimacassars, military models and plans, and old china. He had some valuable engravings and photographs about, and over the fireplace hung a large water-color sketch, "Brockwood," Leicestershire—a magnificent old baronial residence—which, without the slightest foundation for the idea, we all agreed to be the Major's birthplace or inheritance, of which he had been somehow wrongfully deprived.

There was also a big writing-table, surrounded by laden bookshelves, at which he spent most of his spare time, elaborating and revising his great work on tactics, of which we were wont to speak with respectful

admiration. Now imagine over this scene of peaceful propriety a four-armed fiend rampaging, leaving destruction in his train; playing all manner of impish pranks, hiding a bottle of "Brilliantine," carefully uncorked, in the Major's boots; swallowing every stud he possessed under the delusion they were bon bons; or bombarding him with freshly-corrected proof-sheets crumpled and chewed into pellets—and you'll have some notion of the never-failing zest the existence of Congo gave to life in Ballynoggin.

Why *did* he keep it?

Some of Congo's performances turned him livid with rage, but they never drove him to condemning the brute to exile or execution.

"Every man has his pet extravagance," he was wont to say, smiling serenely. "I suppose Congo is mine."

I never but once saw Major Marillier nearer to being excited than when a rumor arose that Congo was lost.

He wasn't, the beast! He had as many hiding-holes as a magpie. My bed was one, and there he was found (in company with Carmody's blacking-brush, one of the Major's immaculate gaiters, and the big owl's head with the red glass eyes that used to adorn Miss Lavinia McCran's hat) just in time to prevent his master from bursting into tears, or offering £100 reward, either of which seemed imminent.

What *did* it mean?

We speculated, argued, betted, nearly fought over it, so disproportionate grew the excitement in the dull stagnation of our lives in Ballynoggin, and got no nearer the truth. Once the solution of the enigma seemed within our grasp—thanks to Mr. Terence O'Flaherty.

He was a local "squireen," proprietor of the beforementioned bog, whom, in default of other society, we used to invite continually to mess.

He was heavy enough when sober; later on, great on Home Rule and the departed glories of Ireland and his family, "the fightin' Flahertys," duellists of note in the brave days of old when Castle Flaherty was

kept up in princely style, and "the clar't in the cellars would have flooded the country for miles round."

O'Flaherty was mixing himself some whiskey and water one evening before departing, romancing the while gloriously, when suddenly a black figure descended with a swing and a bound from somewhere, alighting on O'Flaherty's shoulders. Congo, of course. He clawed fast to O'Flaherty's hair with one hand, and plunged the other into the scalding brew, presumably in search of sugar; then, chattering wrathfully, upset the boiling mixture on O'Flaherty's legs and vanished with a lock of his hair.

O'Flaherty's language was forcible; well it might be. Marillier apologized in the handsomest manner, but the blood of the descendant of "the fightin' Flahertys" was up, and mere words had no power to appease him.

He demanded the instant execution of Congo, or the satisfaction of a gentleman.

"Are these your only alternatives?" asked the Major gravely.

"They are," blustered Terence.

"Then I accept the latter," said Marillier unhesitatingly.

"You're a gentleman, bedad!" exclaimed O'Flaherty, suddenly sobered. "And if you think that dirty little baste worth fightin' about, Terence O'Flaherty's not the man to begrudge you the pleasure. Still, I'd be ready to overlook it, and let bygones be bygones, if you'd give me one single dacent reason for keeping the baste."

A pause, during which we all grew breathless with excitement. Marillier looked as imperturbable as ever. "If one reason will afford you satisfaction, Mr. O'Flaherty, I don't see how I can in fairness refuse you. I keep the beast because—I expect him some day to be worth £4,000 a year to me."

And that was all we ever got out of him.

I got leave in January, and started homeward joyfully.

My father had been promoted to a good living in the country since I left home, and the first week of my visit was spent in seeing and being seen. My sisters Freda and Gertie trotted me all over the place, displaying the church, the cow, the pet old women, the schools, the new pony-trap and the points of view. They treated me with a respect and consideration that was entirely novel, and for which I suspected I had to thank my uniform (which I had been implored to bring with me), but which was nevertheless gratifying. It was all very pleasant and home-like, and I quite forgot how very much in love with Norah McCran I had begun to be one short week ago in Ballynoggin.

My mother in the pride of her heart took me to pay visits with her all over the country, so that when the first Sunday came round, I felt quite intimate with at least half the congregation.

"Who was the funny old lady in a yellow bonnet and furs, sitting under the pulpit?" I asked after dinner.

"Miss Corbett, of Brockwood," said my mother. "You know we called there on Thursday, but she was out."

"And the little nigger with her?"

"Oh! That's a real African prince, her latest pet, son of Oke Jumbo, King of Bonny. She wanted a heathen to convert, herself, and the missionaries had no end of trouble to steal this one for her, as she insisted on his being of good family," Gertie explained.

"She's wild about pets," Freda continued, "and she changes them once a fortnight at least. The place was just like the parrot-house at the Zoo once, when we first came, and the next thing we heard of her was that Dr. Burnaby was furious at being sent for one winter night to see her kangaroos. The climate wasn't agreeing with them. She kept tame snakes once, and they escaped and were never found. No one dared cross the park for months after, as they were supposed to be hiding there."

I heard a good deal more about Miss Corbett's eccentricities before long. She had taken a violent liking to my father, and used to send for him constantly,

much to Freda's disgust, as she had to drive him to Brockwood—"the man," a compound of gardener, butler and coachman, being invalided. The old lady's gravest consideration in life was the disposal of her large property, which was absolutely under her control. Her prospective heirs were as numerous as her pets, and nearly as often changed. "She'll end by dying intestate or leaving everything to the county charities," my father used to say on coming home from one of the numerous interviews he had with her on the subject. "She ought in common decency to provide for her faithful old servants and that unlucky little African in her lifetime, and so I told her."

Next day it was, "Well, I think the old lady has made up her mind at last. She has sent for her nephew from London—her natural heir—and made a will in his favor. It is all very right and nice. I saw it signed and witnessed, and the old one destroyed; that is her regular custom before she signs the new one."

"What's the new one like?" asked Gertie. "Has he come?"

"Oh, such a horror!" broke in Freda, "looks like a little Jew tradesman—and his manners are insufferable. I shan't go near Brockwood again during Mr. Jonathan Marillier's stay."

"Marillier!" I exclaimed. "I thought I had met with Brockwood before, but couldn't imagine where."

"What on earth are you talking about?" said the girls together.

I explained. When I had done Freda began: "That's the very Major Marillier that poor Miss Patty Payne—Miss Corbett's companion—is always telling me about. Yes, he's a cousin, a distant one, and four years ago was here on a visit. Miss Patty goes into wild raptures about him on small provocation. He was very kind to her, poor forlorn little woman. Miss Corbett was delighted with him at first, and then quarrelled furiously with him. I believe he used disrespectful language about her monkey."

"The monkey!" I shouted.

"Why yes, she had one for a pet just then, a nasty,

thieving, mischievous creature. Every one hated it, and it ended by costing poor Major Marillier, Brockwood. Miss Patty doesn't know exactly what the quarrel was about—but Miss Corbett called him a swindler and a time-serving hypocrite one day at dinner, and he got up, said good-by to her quite politely, and left the place at once. His luggage was sent after him —and the monkey. He left orders with the butler that if ever it was to be disposed of, he'd like it. Next day Miss Corbett did nothing but cry and moan after him—saying he had deserted her, and that the monkey should be hanged—so Parker, the butler, took it away, and sent it off to Major Marillier without telling her."

When Freda stopped, I began my story, and had the satisfaction of seeing all the family as puzzled as myself.

"I wish your friend could be induced to make some advances to Miss Corbett," said my father. "I'm sure he would have a good chance of the succession."

"That Marillier will never do," I replied, emphatically. "He's not that sort of man."

"It's a shame!" said Freda, indignantly. "I'll speak to Miss Corbett myself to-morrow: I know she likes me. No! you shall go and tell her what a fine fellow her cousin is. We'll drive over together."

That interview never came off. Once only in our lives were Miss Corbett and I destined to meet. From the moment of Mr. Jonathan Marillier's arrival, all outsiders like ourselves were gently and unobtrusively kept from approaching the poor old woman, who looked feebler and shakier every Sunday. Poor Miss Patty's eyes and nose bore signs of much weeping, and we heard of no new pets being adopted.

One night came a furious peal at the bell, and a mounted groom delivered a note from Miss Patty begging my father to come without delay. "I'll drive you," I called out to him, plunging into some clothes; and in a quarter of an hour we were on the road, greatly wondering what had caused the summons.

Lights were in the Brockwood windows as we drove up. "One!" clanged from the tall clock tower over

our heads as we passed under the echoing archway that led to the big hall. Brockwood was a rambling old red sandstone pile, smothered in ivy, looking gloomy and ghost-ridden enough by daylight, but positively grewsome in the small hours. I was left by Parker, who shook his head dolefully when I inquired after his mistress, with one candle, in a spacious vault of a dining-room, surrounded by grim portraits of dead and gone Corbetts, staring out white from their dingy backgrounds. The gloom and the stillness grew so appalling that I fairly jumped when the door suddenly opened, admitting a truly awful apparition—a figure with dishevelled black ringlets in a shawl pattern dressing-gown, carrying a bedroom candlestick.

"Mr. Marillier, I presume," I retained sufficient composure to remark.

"Yes, I'm Mr. Marillier, Miss Corbett's only nephew. I've not the pleasure of your acquaintance, sir, and at any other time should be happy to make it; but for a stranger to be here just now is—you must excuse my saying it—a—a species of intrusion."

"Miss Corbett sent an imperative summons to my father," I replied.

"Most extraordinary! A very extraordinary proceeding. I am Miss Corbett's natural guardian and protector: I'm her nephew. She only took the name of Corbett with the property. Dear, dear! Rhoda ought to have been here now: a lady can be of so much use—such a pity to have brought your father here at this time of night! And Dr. Burnaby refuses to allow me to see my aunt. Rhoda should have been here, but our baby—our ninth—is only four days old—or she should certainly have been with her dear aunt. Dear, dear, it's such a pity to detain you here!" and so on he maundered in a querulous monotone, while I listened to the clock chiming the quarters, and wondered whatever was going on.

Mr. Jonathan Marillier had talked himself to sleep in his arm-chair when my father entered hastily.

"Tom, my boy, we want you at once," and he hurried me off. "Most extraordinary freak of the dear old

lady's! She has made a new will leaving £20,000 to me! At least I'm to have the life-interest and then it's to go to Freda! She has taken a fancy to her. I can't witness the will, of course, so we want you. The rest of the money goes to the county charities, as I expected. Nothing to that man downstairs."

We entered Miss Corbett's room. The old lady sat upright in bed supported by weeping Miss Patty. In the gloom I could just discover a pair of very bright eyes looking out of a hatchet face surrounded by voluminous frillings. Parker and the old housekeeper were present, and the doctor. On the hearth several sheets of torn blue paper smouldered—the previous will, I supposed. The new one with writing materials was on a table near the bed.

"Do just what she tells you," whispered the doctor; "any discussion or excitement may be fatal. She is quite rational; I can testify to that."

"Is that your son, Mr. Rivers?" asked a high shaky voice from the bed. "Then give me the pen. Quick!" she gasped a little—"quick! See here!"

Parker held the light while she made a shaky but perfectly legible "Annabella." A tap came at the door; she threw the pen down. "It's Jonathan! Keep him out! He'll murder me!" and then fell back speechless.

It was Mr. Jonathan Marillier. We hustled him out with scant ceremony and returned to the bed. Dr. Burnaby shook his head—"It's a question of moments now," and as he spoke Miss Corbett's head fell back on the pillow. Miss Patty broke into a loud fit of sobbing; the unsigned will slipped from the bed and fell at my feet, a useless heap of waste-paper, and in that moment Brockwood and all belonging to it passed from the poor old lady's hands into the grasp of Mr. Jonathan Marillier.

My father behaved splendidly. No allusion to his loss ever passed his lips. He officiated at the funeral, of course. I went, and found myself in the same carriage with a brisk young solicitor from London, representing the firm employed by Miss Corbett.

"He's an awful cad, that Marillier," said Mr. Harry Blew, discussing his client with engaging frankness—"the meanest little screw I ever met with. I hope he'll withdraw his business from us, that's all. Think of his disputing the servants' claims to a month's wages, and recommending us to send that poor little black prince to the Union. He makes me sick, he does. I can't stand him much longer. I must stay down here till affairs are wound up though. Lucky for me the Major's come."

"Major Marillier, from Ireland?"

"Yes; didn't you see him? He's here, man, monkey and all. His affectionate cousin isn't overjoyed to have him, but he seems a cool hand, says he'll stay a week, and evidently doesn't mean to be turned out before he chooses."

Blew went on to tell me that there had been a careful search made for a will, though to a moral certainty none existed, Miss Corbett's ways being well known.

Mr. Jonathan Marillier took possession in due course. Mr. Blew extorted some concessions from him by representing that his conduct would be severely criticised by "the county"; and as Jonathan quite intended starting in life as a local magnate, "as soon as Rhoda could travel," he was amenable to reason.

He actually asked us to dinner one day before Major Marillier departed. I should say that the Major spent a fair share of his time at the rectory, and was deeply touched at hearing of Freda's narrow escape of heiress-ship.

We found the party to consist of Mr. Blew, the Marillier cousins, ourselves, and Lord Allonby, a big, jovial squire of the old school. The dinner was magnificent, worthy of the display of family plate which attended it. Parker waited—under protest; in fact it was only out of consideration for Major Marillier that he condescended to remain under the same roof with Mr. Jonathan, he informed me. It was a dismal ceremony. The cousins were barely on speaking terms. Blew looked bored; Allonby hungry; and the Major grave and curiously absent.

Jonathan was captious and argumentative when he wasn't boastful, talking of the changes that would be made "when the place had a master."

"Where's that pine-apple?" he suddenly asked.

Parker looked slightly confused, but replied with dignity, "An accident has happened to it, I believe, sir; but I'll inquire."

"What has become of it? I insist on knowing!"

Parker had disappeared, but one of the footmen replied:

"The monkey, sir——"

"I'll not stand it!" broke out Jonathan. "It's always 'that monkey,' whatever happens! Yesterday it was the sugar-tongs, old family plate, heirlooms; to-day, the dessert! How any man can reconcile it with his sense of what is honest—simply honest—to be the means of making away with another man's property, I can't conceive."

So he fumed—the Major the while peeling a pear with supreme indifference.

The whole big suite of rooms—yellow drawing-room, blue drawing-room, music-room, boudoir and conservatories—was illuminated for our benefit, but was all too narrow to inclose the explosive elements of our party.

Blew and I at last walked the Major out through the conservatory on to the terrace. It was a warmish February night—such things do befall now and then—and a blazing moon. We walked backward and forward for a turn or two, and then leaned over the balustrade, looking at the expanse of lawn and shrubbery, and the woods beyond all wonderfully clear and distinct in the white, still light. Suddenly a spectral outline flew over the lawn, followed by a very substantial figure in hot pursuit.

"Congo!" exclaimed Marillier and I simultaneously. "Doesn't it recall Ballynoggin?"

Congo it was. He dodged Carmody round and round the fountain, and then—attracted, I presume, by the brilliant range of lighted windows—made for the terrace, came up and over the side in three swarming

leaps, chattered a recognition of his master, and then, to make all safe, seized a trailing bough of ivy and swung himself aloft up to the ornamental stone-work above one of the windows.

Up came Carmody.

"It's the housekeeper's best bonnet, yer honor! She's just dancin' mad after him," he panted.

Congo proceeded to dissect a mangled mass of black stuff, part of which seemed composed of giant grapes made evidently of some inedible substance, for, after tasting one, Congo wrenched off and cracked the others spitefully till he took to pelting Blew with them.

Marillier meanwhile was talking to Carmody.

"There they are, ready enough, I'll be bound, sor," I heard the latter reply. "Two fine active boys, and ladther enough to go up a church steeple, let alone the roof."

"And lanterns?" Marillier asked.

I thought it rather an expenditure of force if they only wished to recover the bonnet, now hopelessly demolished. Congo had put it on, and Allonby, who had just come out, was shouting with laughter.

"Very well, very well, Major Marillier," said Jonathan's voice at the window. "I've found my servants in new mourning once; I can't be expected to replace your brute's——"

Here his remarks were cut short by Congo, who made one leap on to his head, and a second into the room. Marillier sprang after him. He sped like lightning through the whole suit of rooms, across the hall, and into the deserted dining-room. Here, when we came up with him, we found him ravaging the table, his cheek stuffed with preserved fruit and nuts. Allonby tried to throw a napkin over him, but this only produced a fierce chatter, and the creature, now seriously scared, kicking over the épergne, raced back as he had come, out on the terrace, up the ivy, appearing for one moment grinning over the battlemented parapet, the next high on the ridge-tiles of the roof against the sky.

"Shoot him!" shrieked Jonathan, half frantic. "He's

got the nut-crackers! A sovereign to the man who gets a gun and brings him down."

"I'll give ten to any man who can bring him back alive!" shouted the Major.

"Here you are, sir!" sang out a gardener's boy, hurrying forward with a ladder on his shoulder.

He placed it against the wall, and up he went. Up went Carmody with a lantern swinging in his teeth. Up went Major Marillier, shouting, "Come along—some one—Blew or Rivers!"

Up went all, followed by two men with additional lengths of ladder, stirred by a simultaneous impulse of frolic, to join the mad game of follow my leader (and that leader Congo) over the roof of Brockwood.

There can never have been a weirder scene under the stars than that monkey-hunt. Brockwood looked as big as a small village by the half-light. The roof ran up into countless peaks and ridges, now and then descending sheer into abysses of blackness, now opening into great wide plains of lead roofing, with treacherous pitfalls of skylights. The great stacks of chimneys cast black shadows across our way; an owl flapped out at us; lights began to flit about excitedly in the windows that overlooked our course; the servants turned out on the watch for Congo's descent, and we four lunatics in evening dress ran, halloed, slipped, scrambled and perilled our necks more times than we cared to count, without the smallest chance of ever coming up with our quarry unless by his own good pleasure. Carmody, in good training from long practice, kept well up; then the boy, an ex-slater, it appeared; then we four at varying distances. Jonathan Marillier had taken heart of grace, and ascended, but contented himself with surveying us from a distance.

Congo took it easy; now and then disappearing entirely into some hiding hole among the chimneys. When he did so, I noticed that Carmody marked the place before dislodging him.

At last, after a steady run of fifteen minutes, he seemed to conclude that it was time to dispense with our attendance, and accordingly made for "home."

We could hardly keep him in view as he flew up to a higher level and round to the front of the house, then up the steep slant of the roof of the big hall, and with a mighty leap gained an arched opening at the top of the clock-tower.

Carmody gave a wild "Hurroo" of triumph and was after him like a cat. Congo danced and defied him madly. He was safe until we could get the ladders up. At last they came, also Jonathan. The gardener's boy swarmed up first, but retreated in dismay from a vigorous onslaught of Congo's.

"Never mind the monkey!" shouted the Major; "turn out his hiding-place."

I looked at Marillier in amaze. His voice was cracked and shaky with excitement, his face deathly pale with a grim, desperate look about it. In his disordered dress and tangled hair no one could have recognized him as the standard of military propriety so well known to Ballynoggin.

Then followed a queer scene. We all got as close under the tower as we could. Some one sent us up more lanterns and a clothes-basket, into which the contents of poor Congo's treasure-house were flung, he meanwhile lamenting piteously or grimacing with impotent wrath from the top of the tower: First the sugar-tongs, also the crown of the missing pineapple; next my father's gold eyeglass missing since the funeral, and one of Parker's shoes, also a handful of livery buttons, apparently wrenched off. That seemed the total of his recent pilferings; but under a layer of rubbish came a collection evidently dating from his earlier days at Brockwood; a faded and battered work-basket once brilliant with satin and beads; a gold-topped smelling-bottle; a set of kitchen skewers; a prayer-book and an evil-smelling mass which on investigation proved to have been once a tongue highly decorated and frilled with lace paper. We got quite excited at first, but it began to feel chilly and we made a movement toward a friendly attic window opened for our descent.

"Stop, please," implored the Major; "only a moment

longer!" His voice was husky and queer, and his hand, laid on my arm, trembled violently.

"Hurry, men! Is that all?"

"Every bit, sir, except some torn papers and litter."

"Send it down."

Down came an armful of rubbish. Allonby kicked it over as it lay at his feet in the gutter. "More family plate, ha! ha!" and he picked up a tin flour dredger, battered and rusty. "What's this inside?" A big envelope full of papers was doubled up and crushed into it.

"Family letters! That is my affair," said Jonathan. "Hold the lanterns, some one."

They were damp and discolored, but the envelope, linen-lined, still hung together. Blew looked over his shoulder.

"'Last Will and Testament of——'" he read; "I think, Mr. Marillier, I had better take charge of that," and he drew it without ceremony from Jonathan's hand. "Suppose we go down and look this over, gentlemen."

We left Congo and his tormentors to adjust their differences, and descended. Such a set of dirty, disreputable figures as the drawing-room mirrors reflected, if any one had had time to think of it.

My father started from a quiet nap, and stared in amazement at our appearance, but stared more when he beheld our plunder. It proved to be, as we all guessed, one of Miss Corbett's numerous wills, and, wonder of wonders! in favor of Gustavus Adolphus Marillier of H. M.'s 112th Regiment (Royal Manx Fusileers)!

I gave a cheer—I couldn't help it—so did Allonby; and we rushed at him to congratulate him, before we remembered Jonathan's presence. He raged, stormed, talked of conspiracy, and vowed he'd fight it out; but Blew assured him he had no chance—the document was all right and regular, and I think he was sharp enough to see that the Major was too good a fellow not to make him some compensation for his disappointment, if he gave in decently.

At last, about midnight, we quieted down, and let Marillier tell us his story.

"My good cousin, the late Miss Corbett, quarrelled with me in due course," he said, "the very week after the will was made. Never mind how the dispute came about. The new will and the new favorite—a very distant cousin—were both on the premises, and I was ready to go, when this precious document was missed. Nothing would convince Miss Corbett that I had not purloined it. Why I should do so I can't conceive. However, I left. I had had some experience of Congo's doings, and the idea struck me that some day I might have the chance of hunting him down and convicting him of the theft. My chief object was to justify myself with Miss Corbett, of course, and to that straw of hope I have clung till her death seemed to have rendered it useless. When I found she had died intestate, then you may guess that I thought the chance too valuable to miss, and have kept Carmody on the alert ever since my arrival here."

So the mystery was cleared, and my story ends. People who like to hear the very last of everything may care to know that the Major (now Colonel of Militia) has left the service, and is forming himself into the realized ideal of the English squire and county member. The said characters being in their perfection inconsistent with old bachelorhood, and Freda's unpaid legacy being still a small grievance with him, I have a strong idea that he intends to discharge all his obligations with one graceful act, and prevail on her to accept Brockwood —plus the master. I hope so, at least. Any more? The little black prince—not much converted, I'm afraid —shivered miserably through a few months more of England, and then at his own earnest petition was dispatched in care of a party of missionaries from Liverpool back to his own sunny Africa, and—took Congo with him.

The pretty legend of "The Changed Cross" applies exactly to this neat story by Ruth Hall from *Kate Field's Washington*. Habit becomes a tyrant after men and women pass forty, and personal comfort outweighs any amount of sentimental pleasure.

HER HEART'S DESIRE.

"WALK right in," said Miss Cynthia Ruggles to the two girls who stood at her front door. "There's a good fire in th' settin' room."

It was, indeed, a cheerful room into which she led them. A flood of frosty sunshine streamed through the four low windows and the fire glowed in the open Franklin stove. A bright braided mat lay on the hearth and a tortoise-shell cat was curled up on it. A canary sang in its gilded cage; a globe of goldfish stood on a little stand with a crimson cover; there were various effects in tissue paper and Japanese fans upon the walls; a gay afghan was folded across the lounge and crazy patchwork cushions adorned the chairs. Visitors did not notice that the furniture was old and worn. They all said as these girls did now:

"My, ain't it cozy and homelike!"

If Miss Cynthia had been a sophisticated woman, she would have called her taste a love of color. As she was a simple, narrow little country soul, she only rubbed her hands nervously together and beamed her satisfaction at such flattery as this.

"We come, Miss Ruggles," said one of the girls, looking appealingly at the other, "t' ask a great favor of you. I hope," with a constrained giggle, "you're real good natured this mornin'."

Her hostess assumed a prim air of importance, pursing up her lips and looking supremely solemn. She felt very independent in the village of Higley, as a person who was not "doin' business," which always entails conciliatory manners. Her income—tiny, but sufficient for her actual needs, and a trifle over—was

invested in Government bonds. She had all of woman's thirst for power, with great good nature and a soft heart. She waited in grave silence for what was to come.

"We want t' know," Delia Richardson went on bashfully, "if you'll learn us how t' make wax fruit. I'll do as much for you some day, an' so'll Sophy."

Sophy nodded her head.

"Oh, I'm agreeable," Miss Cynthia assented, her eyes beginning to shine. "They ain't nothin' I love better t' do 'n fuss with wax. It's elegant work."

She crossed over to a closet and took a pasteboard box from the shelf, the girls watching every movement in reverential awe. She carefully lifted out a large wicker basket. It was filled with representations of apples, oranges, pears and other edibles.

"There," said Miss Cynthia, trying to veil the triumph in her tone by a sigh at the basket's weight as she set it on the centre-table. "I'm fixin' this up t' send t' th' fair nex' fall."

"Oh, look a' that cucumber!" exclaimed Delia, hanging over the display in ecstasy. Even the silent Sophy emitted a cry of delight. It was a sweet moment for Miss Cynthia.

"I never could make 'em like this! could I?" proceeded Delia. "Why, they're just as natural! Seems if I could bite right in that plum. An' raisins, too!"

"I made up them raisings myself," the exhibitor explained with dignity. "I'm goin' t' make a potato, too, an' some green peas. I guess I can. It's just as fascinatin' when ye git t' doin' it! I'd re'lly love t' learn ye."

Delia expressed their common thanks. "I've always heard about your beautiful fruit," she said, "but I never seen any of it before. Is it hard t' do?"

"Not very when you've got th' moulds." Miss Cynthia reseated herself and picked up the cat. "If you think my fruit's so nice," she reflected aloud, "I wonder what you'd 'a' said t' Sarah Gibbons's flowers. They *was* lovely."

"Wax?"

"Yes. Just made out of common white wax like them is. But, I declare, you'd most think they was growin'. You'd ought to seen her fuchsias. They was just as natural! One time she sprinkled some o' th' leaves with cologne, so's you could smell 'em, too."

The girls gave little, staccato shrieks at this ingenuity. "Where is she now?" asked Delia.

"O, she's married. She was old Squire Gibbons's daughter. They lived nex' door there, where th' Lockwoods is now. My! we uset t' set up till all hours o' night a-workin' together. Sev'ral times 'twas broad daylight before we closed our eyes."

Again the two cried out together.

"But she got married," continued Miss Cynthia mournfully, "an' moved off int' York State. I've often wondered ef she kep' up her wax flowers. Seems if she'd ought 'o."

"Yes, indeed," said Delia.

After the friends had gone away and Miss Cynthia sat down again by the fire, she fell to thinking of Sarah Gibbons; not, as usual, with a questioning interest, but with a fluttering feeling of tenderness that was almost painful in its intensity. The talk, and the sight of the two inseparable companions, brought back memories of her own girl friend and all the confidences, plans and pleasures of years ago; most of all, of their absorption in their art.

"She's got some one t' take care o' her," mused Miss Cynthia, "an' a lot o' little children. An' here I be, settin' by my fire, all alone. It mus' be pleasant t' have a baby what belongs t' ye. I wonder how it would seem?"

The cat mewed. "Yes, kitty, yes; I s'pose it's dinner time." She glanced at the clock. "I've wasted th' hull mornin'. I don't b'lieve I'll wait t' cook a reg'lar dinner. I'll just have some pie, 'n' a cup o' tea, an 'git supper a little early with somethin' hot."

Before she went to bed, Miss Cynthia wrote to Sarah Gibbons. She asked about the children, and waxed almost sentimental over a namesake of her own. An answer came, after so long a time that Miss Cynthia

had given up all idea of hearing, and had recovered her usual poise of mind so that she felt ashamed of the burst of affection. Mrs. Duncan wrote kindly. She said that she had been hindered from writing before, but that Cynthia's letter brought back old times, and made her real homesick. "I'd like to see you first rate," she wrote in the small and delicate characters taught forty years ago. Why can't you come out and make us a visit? He would admire to meet you, and I guess the children would not quite pull you to pieces."

Miss Cynthia let the letter fall into her lap. "I'd like t' go," she said to herself. It 'u'd seem queer t' shut up th' house, an' I s'pose I couldn't sleep in a strange bed. But I'd like t' go."

Her arrangements were soon made. The cat, the canary, and the goldfish were committed to the care of Lucinda Lockwood, whose oldest son, according to the terms of the bargain, was to go all over the house, each day, "on account o' th' insurance."

"I may be gone two weeks," she announced to the neighbors who flocked in to say good-by, "but, likelier, it won't be more'n one. I ain't uset t' bein' away from home."

"It'll seem awful queer here, without you," some one remarked. "We won't have no place t' run in."

"No," Lucinda Lockwood added, "an' I shell miss th' smoke out o' th' kitchen chimbly. I always feel's if I mus' look over ev'ry mornin' t' make sure Miss Cynthy ain't died in th' night."

Miss Cynthia's heart glowed at these tokens of good will. It was not the first time since her mother's death left her alone that she had vaguely understood what she could not express—that the village life encompassed her and cared for her. Then, too, having no men folks to do for made her lax as to meal hours and ready in emergencies. Every one was free to run in at all times, and apt to call upon her for any sudden pleasuring or any dire need. It all was very sweet and dear to her, now that she was about to turn her back upon it.

Mrs. Duncan's boy, Addison, met her at the station

—a rosy, bashful fellow, midway in his teens. He took the "company's" numerous parcels, and she found it pleasant to be thus waited on.

"Your ma mus' take a sight o' comfort," she observed, walking up the snowy street, "in havin' someun t' fetch 'n' carry for 'er. I wisht I had a grown-up son."

"I do' know," said the boy, grinning shamefacedly, "mebby, if ye had t' mend my clo'es, you wouldn't. You ought 'o see my stockin's; I go through 'em like that." He slid one hand across the other to express great speed. "Ma'd 'a' come out herself," he went on, "but Benny had earache 'n' cried."

"Earache! Oh, my! That's dretful. Can't ye do nothin' for it?"

The boy stared at her. "I guess ye'd think they done somethin' for it if ye'd heard 'em up las' night. Ma never slep' a wink after two o'clock."

Miss Cynthia made a sound of sympathy by clicking her tongue against her teeth.

"He *will* play in the snow," said the elder brother disapprovingly, "an' then he gits th' earache. There's ma now, an' th' kids, in the window."

There was a prodigious amount of giggling and ducking and waving of hands. Miss Cynthia was quite bewildered and altogether delighted by it.

"How she has fell off!" was her unspoken comment upon her old friend's appearance, and—though that she could not know—these were the very words that Sarah was saying to herself. The one had grown prim and precise, and dressed in the quaint style of her youth. The other wore the air of one who knew the world, but her hair was roughened by little fingers, her face was worn and thin, and the baby-blanket pinned across her shoulders gave her almost an invalid air. The five children were a sheer delight to the eye; apple-cheeked and yellow-haired. Miss Cynthia kissed one after another, though they pulled away and pounded at her with their small fists.

"They's nothin' like young folks, is they?" she said wistfully.

"No, indeed, they ain't." Mrs. Duncan gave the

baby a quick hug. "A house don't amount t' much—Lizzy, if I see ye lay finger on your little brother again——"

The trio who were scuffling and showing off in the corner tumbled to the floor in a confused heap. It took Addison and his mother both to disentangle and shake them out properly. Miss Cynthia remarked upon the big boy's general goodness after he had left the room.

"He *is* good," assented the mother, fondly. "He's real good—Benny, leave that cushion be. He ain't over quick at learnin', Addy ain't, an' him 'n' me 'd like t' have him quit school; he's goin' on seventeen. But Samyell is all for havin' him graduate. It frets me—Lizzie, stop, I tell ye—th' continual time. He's got a cough, for all he looks so rugged. He'd be a good deal—hush, baby; hush, baby—ma's right here—a good deal better off in th' store, 'long 'th his gran'pa. It stan's to reason that settin' all day is bad for 'im."

"Then I wouldn't have it," expostulated Miss Cynthia, much alarmed. "I'd put him in th' store."

"His pa won't see it that way." Mrs. Duncan frowned worriedly. "An' I know just how it'll be. Gran'pa 'll take Jane's boy in. An' he'll go right on. —Children, keep still; ye can't hear a body think!—an' by an' bye he'll have th' bus'ness. An' Addy named for th' ole man too!"

Her visitor looked properly sympathetic. "Samyell's as good as gold," proclaimed the loyal wife, "but if I do say it myself, that oughtn't t' say it, he's awful set. You can't budge 'im."

She went off presently, to see about supper. "I've got a girl in th' kitchen," she explained, "that ye can't trust t' put a potato on t' boil." And standing in the doorway, soothing the baby and scolding the children, she entered upon a long disquisition, having for its theme the evil ways of maids and the woes of mistresses. When, at length, Miss Cynthia was left to herself, she looked around her chair-back at her tittering, blushing companions. "Come see Aunt Cynthy, sonny," she began, ingratiatingly, holding out her hand to Benny.

"You ain't my aunt."

"Don't ye want"—she racked her brains to please them—"t' hear a nice story 'bout a ole hen 'n' her little bits o' chickies?"

There was an instantaneous avalanche of young Duncans. They fell upon her like wolves. Miss Cynthia had never known a tenderer emotion than that which filled her heart as she sat, her namesake on her lap, the others leaning against her knee, while she told an old, foolish story, with their eager, upturned faces to spur her on. She told it with an elaboration which one used to the ways of children would have avoided. She spoke in a mincing voice, and imitated various domestic fowls to the entire satisfaction of her audience. Directly she ceased, "tell it again," demanded Benny, pounding on the chair arm.

"O, not that one. Shell I tell ye 'bout——"

"Tell it again."

Both little girls puckered up their faces. "I want t' hear 'bout th' chickabiddy," they said in duet.

Miss Cynthia repeated the tale, with—now that it was too late—an attempt at lopping off superfluous ornamentation.

These efforts were speedily detected and checked. Not one silly syllable could be omitted. Then she finished.

"Tell it again," said Benny.

"Once they was an ole hen," began Miss Cynthia in a droning tone.

A shout arrested her. "Ye said ole chickabiddy."

Mrs. Duncan thrust her head in from the dining-room. "Havin' a good time? That's right. Don't wake th' baby. He's just dropped off t' sleep."

When her husband came home to supper, half an hour later, he found their guest surrounded by three impatient infants greedily following the latest repetition of the favorite tale.

"Them young ones won't give ye no peace," he observed gayly, shaking hands with her, "now they've found out you can tell 'em stories. They're th' greatest hands for stories I ever see."

He smiled as though this were a rare trait. He soon turned his attention to weightier matters.

"Sate," he called, "ain't tea 'most ready? I've been waitin' here five minutes. I should think, with a girl in th' kitchen, ye could have meals in some kind o' season."

Mrs. Duncan looked much mortified. "In a second, Samyell," she said. "Baby woke 'n' had t' be took up. Is th' biscuits done, Mame? Then come on."

It was a very nice supper, but Miss Cynthia had gone too long without, and had a headache now. "I'd 'a' offered ye a cup o' tea when ye first come, Cynthy," said her hostess, "if 'twasn't Mame is so put out if ye go in th' kitchen between meals. She's awful quick-tempered, an' we have t' humor 'er. 'Tain't none too easy gettin' a girl for a family th' size o' ourn."

"We'll have t' be lookin' up a beau for Miss Ruggles," announced the gentleman of the house, biting into his cake. "Mus'n't have no old maids 'round here."

He was so far from intending an insult that none could be accepted. Yet Miss Cynthia felt that she hated him. She had never been called an old maid, to her face, before. She hailed the bedtime hour for the children, who clung close to her till it came. It gave Sarah a little respite, too, and a chance for something more than a half-hearted attention to the information as to whom Lije Buckley married, and what became of the Terwilliger girls. "Samyell," however, had his daily paper to read, and must not be disturbed; so the two women took their basket of stockings into the corner, and conversed in an undertone.

"D' ye ever do wax flowers any more?" Miss Cynthia inquired.

Mrs. Duncan almost spoke aloud in her astonishment. "Land! no. I ain't touched 'em sence Addy was born. I don't have no time."

Her old friend regarded her mournfully across the sock she was filling in. "But sech talent as you had, Sarah!"

Mrs. Duncan laughed rather bitterly. "A married woman ain't no use for talent."

Yet, when she took Cynthia in to see her children, asleep, their red cheeks pressed into the pillow, fond tears filled her eyes. "It's better'n wax flowers, Cynthia," she said. "I let Benny have that big basket o' fruit you made for me, one day when he had th' mumps. He cried for it."

Miss Cynthia might have sympathized with the first part of this speech, had it not been for its close. No child need have wax fruit because he cried for it.

There was a peremptory kicking on her door before the wintry daylight. There were loud voices that would not be gainsaid demanding the chickabiddy. Miss Cynthia was a late riser as country people go. She did not relish the early breakfast, "t' git th' children off t' school," nor the horrible bustle and stir in adjusting coats and hunting up mittens and tippets.

Indeed, it seemed to the peaceful, sober spinster that Mrs. Duncan did naught with her days save walk up and down with the baby, brave the quick-tempered Mame, serve meals, and welcome, or speed, her family. It was a life of incessant hurry and worry. Miss Cynthia gazed aghast upon it. "Samyell" was a good provider, his wife declared, and showed himself, in his way, devoted to his home. But he was fault-finding and officious—"a hen hussy" his guest considered him. Each child was a separate care, from Benny who woke the echoes almost every midnight after playing in the snow, to the baby, already developing a will that fretted his parents constantly.

Mrs. Duncan found a certain comfort in retailing her daily grievances. She had no notion—so immeasurably superior do the married deem their state—what deductions her visitor was drawing, as time went on. It seemed to Miss Cynthia that next Thursday would never come. She felt that she could not, in decency, start home under a week, but how she longed for her sunny little rooms, her cat and canary! They were company, but never cried, nor teased for chickabiddy. They showed affection without interrupting her most exciting narrative to Sarah by incessant questions, or by an inopportune header down the basement stairs.

She wanted to order her own meals, and have pie as often as she chose. "Samyell" didn't believe in pastry, and Sarah had given up making coffee because no one drank it besides herself.

"You mus' come again, some time," Mrs. Duncan said, swinging the baby to her shoulder to kiss her friend farewell. "Th' visit's done you good. You look younger 'n' brighter 'n when you come."

Miss Cynthia always resented allusions to her age, but she could not say now that it was the thought of home that made her eyes shine and her cheeks glow. How sweet it was that evening to seat herself, when the neighbors had gone, before the open fire in the little rocker, her cat upon her knee; to rest, in body and in spirit, from the turmoil and the trials of those long seven days; not to have her nerves shocked by a sudden crash nor her brain fagged by incessant demands.

Once in the night she started up, dreaming that she heard a step upon the stair, and that baby had the croup.

"Land sakes," she thought, as she replaced her tired head on the pillow, "I wouldn't be Sarah Gibbons!"

At that very same moment, Mrs. Duncan, many miles away, was creeping back to bed after a stealthy visit to Lizzy's crib, to see that she was covered up. She was worn out with a long, hard day; another stretched before her on the morrow. As she softly drew back the quilt, her hand touched the baby's rose-leaf palm. Tears came to moisten those weary eyes.

She took the warm little body on her arm. "Land sakes," she reflected, as her head sought the pillow, "I wouldn't be Cynthy Ruggles!"

Possibly the old uncle in the following story had understood the love-affair in his household better than the young people could know. Their pretty romance is by J. H. Rosny, and is translated for this magazine by E. J. Fagundus.

THE CAPTURE.

MARTHA, the old servant, awakened me. She said, "Your uncle is dying!"

I went down-stairs, and again found myself before the half-open door, where for the past two days I had been watching the agony of my uncle. He had brought me up, and had been the kindest of guardians. He had banished me from his presence. He had commanded that I should not be admitted to the château. He had done all this without motive, without any offence on my part, but simply, *because he had disinherited me for her!*

Her! I see her moving about in the dying man's room, a few steps from me. There she reigns as a sovereign. She devotes herself to the patient. She obeys each request of the doctor, who, with her, watches by my uncle's bedside. I watch her every movement and a wild hatred, mixed with agony and humiliation, burns in my veins.

On my return from Germany, I found her living at my uncle's and he said to me:

"She is my old friend Sénart's daughter. He died ruined,—poor old fellow! I hope that you will not object to my giving her a small dowry. You will still be a millionaire!"

She was very beautiful, but proud and haughty. She received me coldly and in a very ungracious manner, but in spite of that I fell promptly in love with her. Her step made me tremble, and her fine profile charmed me. At the end of a month, I would have given heaven and earth for her love. I dared to tell her so, to ask her to marry me, but she refused me without hesitation.

"Never!" she declared positively.

Ah! that "never!" It broke my heart, but I answered her calmly:

"You might have told me so more gently."

"It would have been less efficacious!" she returned calmly. And I admired the barbaric frankness of her answer, like the sentimental fool that I was!

To-day I know what the girl with the dark eyes was hiding! I now understand her silence, her cold reception, her insulting rejection. It was because she was sure of her position. Already she knew that she should rob me of my fortune. And to think that during the past two days I have not told her how I despise her! To think that I was satisfied to avoid her, not to talk to her! How she must laugh at my folly!

As this thought enters my mind, I am about to enter the room. But the words of the doctor still sound in my ears:

"Do you wish to kill the patient? It can be done in a minute. A sudden emotion, a surprise, and he goes!"

Thus even nature is in favor of the spoiler! Again I look at her. She is leaning over the bed with the expression of a Madonna!

Suddenly the old man moves and moans like a little child. My heart is filled with pity for him. Then he calls: "Laure!"

The doctor moves quickly, I hear a confused whispering, then a cry:

"I am suffocating! Ah—I——"

A dead silence,—then a rattling in the throat,—and again silence.

Then the doctor leans over the bed, listens, and finally says in a low voice:

"He is dead."

Laure hides her face in her hands; I approach. I would like to accuse her, but a puerile sense of respect keeps me silent, and it is she who speaks first: "I would like to say something to you."

Her eyes are filled with tears; but her voice is resolute. It seems as if she were defying me.

However, I consent and lead her into the next room. There we remain looking at each other for a minute without speaking. It is she who continues:

"You will excuse me for not having sent for you sooner,—but your uncle refused absolutely to see you, and considering his condition, I had only to obey. That was at least the opinion of the doctor. Believe me, I am sorry!"

"I should think so!" I exclaim with an insulting laugh.

She looked me full in the face,—her eyes flashed,—and she stopped crying. "You will regret that laugh!" she said haughtily. "It is cowardly! Your duty as a gentleman is first to listen to me."

I was struck with her attitude, although I believed it to be only another form of duplicity; and I replied gravely:

"Be it so! I will listen to you."

She continued then vehemently:

"I know that you believe that I influenced your uncle. I know that you believe me responsible for his change of mind toward you, and guilty of having captured his estate. I know that you believe me avaricious, a liar, a plotter! However, I am none of these things!"

"Ah! then you are not his heiress?" I asked with bitter irony.

"*Yes!* I am his heiress! But I did nothing that the most scrupulous delicacy could object to! I often begged your uncle to send for you, and I only ceased when the doctor assured me that my constant demands worried the patient. Your uncle was my benefactor. He saved me from misery, and I could not do anything which would prove me ungrateful. When he was attacked with the strange whim of preferring me to you, I was obliged to submit; as he was then too ill to be opposed——"

"But you inherit the estate!" I repeated with the same melancholy irony.

"I inherit it——well?"

She gazed fixedly at me.

"If you were in my place, what would you think?" I exclaimed.

"Just what you will think!" and she drew a small packet from her pocket and handed it to me, saying, "Forgive the old man, and destroy this proof of his delirium!"

I was too much astonished to speak. My hands trembled. Confusedly I realized how wrong I had been in blaming her.

"What do you mean?" I finally stammered.

"That is the will. I give it to you, and you remain the heir of your unhappy uncle."

I was so overcome by her answer that I was obliged to lean against the wall for support; so ashamed that I could not look her in the face,—her, whom I had so basely accused.

After a few minutes, I collected myself and begged in a supplicating voice:

"Forgive me! Take back this packet! I would rather die than accept the estate on such conditions."

"And I!" she exclaimed, vehemently and disdainfully, "do you think that I will touch it? Do you think that I would defile myself by stealing?"

"I have misunderstood you!" I exclaimed. "I have acted like a brute! I am a miserable fool!"

"It does not matter now! We shall probably never see each other again!" She spoke gently, in an absent manner. Her beautiful eyes had a far-away look,—and now I *knew* that she was really pure, innocent, stainless.

"Ah!" I murmured. "Of what use is the money to me! To receive it thus from your hands is the hardest of punishments. I will not have it! To receive it from you who refused me so coldly!—from you who despise me with such humiliating gentleness! I should consider myself disgraced for life!"

"What do you say? Disgraced? because I return to you what belongs to you? Because I refuse to profit by the unreasonable whim of an invalid!"

She retreated a few steps, and her admirable beauty

filled my heart with adoration. "Ah! why would you not accept my love?" I cried. "Why would you let me have no part in your life?"

"I was a poor girl, treated with kindness and trusted. I should have betrayed that kindness and trust in listening to you."

"Would you have listened to me then, if you had been rich?" I exclaimed.

She cast down her eyes and remained a minute undecided. Then, lifting her long eyelashes, she said simply,

"I think so!"

My excitement increased, words failed me and I could only stammer:

"But now—you can——"

She motioned me to be silent. After a few minutes of deep thought, she said:

"To-day, I think that I have the right to listen to you. My refusal or acceptance depends now only upon my own inclination."

I approached and implored her:

"Accept my life or refuse it!"

"I will not refuse it!" she answered gently. And suddenly, smiling sweetly, she said, with subtle feminine irony:

"I would never have refused it. For if you fell quickly in love with me, I too, was not slow in loving you!"

I caught Laure's hands and kissed them humbly, but she gently drew them away and begged me to remember the presence of the dead, which, to tell the truth, I had almost forgotten.

Thus I captured my inheritance.

The insidious nature of certain social temptations is most amusingly set forth in this racy story by James Payn.

ONLY A CHARADE.

I.—THE SMALL END OF THE WEDGE.

Proverbs, like people, are sometimes so familiar that they only excite contempt. There is one connected with "the small end of a wedge" which, from its "constant appearance upon platforms in connection with the British lion," used to form a subject of mirth with dear Charles Dickens, and I confess (until lately) with me also. I had heard of it so many times, always spoken of in tones of warning, and yet seen no sort of harm result from its application, that I did not believe it, even as a metaphor. It had become a mere vague and shadowy menace, like "the beast" in Revelation, only, of course, smaller. It was always used when we in England adopted any improvement in our affairs borrowed from the United States—such as sherry cobblers, for example, or goloshes. It was the first step toward "Americanizing our institutions"—and all the rest of it. Now, I have been much the better for sherry cobblers (and very seldom the worse), and I believe goloshes to have been the first step (although rather a slippery one) to my enfranchisement from colds. The Reform bill, vote by ballot, table ice, Nepaul pepper, and arbitration have all been "small ends of the wedge" in their time, as doubtless at an earlier period of the world's history were clothes, combs, cooked food, and sobriety. I had known no harm come of these things, and I ridiculed those who thought that harm would come of them, and who quoted the above words of warning. Therefore, when a certain loving daughter of mine whispered to me after dinner one evening, "Papa, let us have charades," and my brother the lawyer, who overheard her, remarked, "Take care what

you are about, Jim; charades are the small end of the wedge," I said, "Well, we'll see about it, darling," to the one, and "Why not, Jack?" to the other.

"Well, I'll tell you 'why not,'" said Jack, who didn't look like a Jack at all—only we had always called each other by our boyish names—being bald and fat, and also Recorder of Maryborough, "and if you are wise, you'll listen to my advice. Charades are not bad in themselves, except for their stupidity; but if by some unlucky accident they chance to succeed, they are as certain as D. T. is the end of drinking to be followed by *private theatricals.*"

"Oh, nothing would induce me," said I with confidence, "to have my house turned upside down by the performance of private theatricals."

"That girl there, Jenny, will induce you," was Jack's oracular reply, delivered in the severe tone with which he addressed prisoners in the dock. "Once convicted of weakness in allowing them to act charades, you will be hurried by your wife and daughters into the vortex of the amateur drama, and——" Here Jack's mouth was stopped by a pink plump hand, about an inch long, which belonged to our baby, and had been dexterously applied to the offending mouth by his favorite sister, Grace. She had picked him up and cast him into her uncle's lap—who doted on the child—with the quickness of a fireman who sees at once the point where a conflagration is making head, and turns the hose on. In "Baba's" clutch, Uncle John, who was also his godfather, was powerless; his judicial lips could then only kiss and purr.

"But what *are* these charades?" inquired I, more alarmed than I cared to show at the loss of my ally; for Jack, though not himself a *paterfamilias*, had a fellow-feeling for me, I knew. "I thought charades were the same as riddles. Of course, you may ask as many riddles——"

"Oh, you wicked story!" cried Jenny.

"Oh, Mr. Innocence!" cried Grace.

It was hopeless to stem the tide of juvenile Sadduceeism, and the more so as I felt convicted of being a

Pharisee myself, for I knew perfectly well what charades were. In this strait, I looked toward my wife for help, with, "What do *you* think, Julia?" Julia was working at some embroidery, from which she had never raised her eyes, though perfectly conscious of the siege that was being laid to me, and she only raised them now to say, "The girls seem to have set their hearts upon it, Jim; but, of course, you will do as you please," which was equivalent to going over to the enemy. When a wife tells her husband that "of course, he will do as he pleases," he is, if I may use the expression, "done for." There is no compulsion—only he must. It was not necessary for Jack to laugh contemptuously (which he did), and to inform me that the affair was settled from that moment as to the charades.

"You see, Grace, being tall and stately," explained Jenny, "is to be *Thalestris*, Queen of the Amazons; and I, being a good deal shorter, though much more beautiful and accomplished, am to be her daughter *Lampeto.* Cousin Tom has written the loveliest verses for us to recite in character; and Baba is to appear with gilt all round his frock as the grandchild of *Alexander.* My dear old papa knows the story, of course."

"Oh, yes," said I, coldly, for it was the first time I had ever heard of it. "But I hope Baba will not have much to say, because his vocabulary is rather limited."

"What nonsense you talk, papa! He is to be my baby, of course, and *Thalestris* wants to kill him, because he is not a girl, such being the custom among the Amazons."

"And a very good notion, too," observed Jack, judicially. "If we had only one criminal class, or at least sex, even though that were the most troublesome one, to deal with in this country, it would immensely simplify matters."

"There, you see," cried Jenny triumphantly, (though not understanding in the least.) "Uncle John is already converted to our opinion. He sees that it will be an excellent charade."

"Nay, my dear, I only said it would have a good moral," observed the Recorder gravely.

"The moral is everything," said Grace confidently; "that is, if we can hire the proper dresses. Mamma thinks that for five pounds——"

Julia shook her head.

"Well, then, for six pounds——"

"I never said one word about the matter, Grace, as you know very well," said my wife reprovingly; "I simply referred you to your father."

"Well, then, let us *say* six pounds, papa. That will procure the armor——"

"Armor!" cried I. "You're not going to appear in armor, surely!"

"Oh, yes, and on horseback," put in Uncle John. "You can hire trained horses from the Hippodrome."

"Don't believe him, papa. We wish for nothing out of the way nor extravagant. Just a little body armor, with silver sandals instead of shoes."

"The well-greaved Grecians," observed the Recorder, who prided himself on his classical attainments.

"Just so," continued Grace, whose way it is to take not only silence for consent to any of her propositions, but also all remarks not absolutely of an antagonistic character. "And Tom will lend us his bows and arrows."

"No, no. You will be shooting all over the place," said I. I had begun to perceive by my wife's being so quiet that the suggestion was insidious, and the whole affair of quite a serious character.

"But, my dear papa, the bows will be only strung at our backs, and the arrows will be in their quivers; and you said you would 'see about it,' you know, and you never go back from your word."

And that was how the charades came about, as many other things do in the house of which I am the reputed master, where to hesitate is to be compromised, and to "see about it" is a binding promise.

The girls assured me that the "proper dresses" had been procured from Nathan's (the costumer); so, although I confess that they did not altogether come up to—or rather down to—*my* ideas of propriety, I supposed it was so. The spectators, too, were, fortunately,

confined to a select circle of relations or familiar friends; and really the way in which Grace stood, spear in hand, as *Queen of the Amazons*, and denounced the degeneracy of her daughter because she wouldn't drown Baba like a kitten, made one quite a convert to infanticide.

"Daughter of mine thou art not," (which was certainly very true.) "What should this madness mean?" she inquired with ferocity; and then proceeded with a personal narrative: had not she (*Thalestris*)—

"Sought the Macedonian out from amidst his wars,
And turned her softest love-songs to the clash of cimeters.
That there should be a Princess as was not looked upon
Since the great sun began to shine or Thermodon to run,
To whose bold heart not stranger should be the rush of fear
Than that false love which dyes thy cheek and shames it with a tear,
Whose voice should speak, as I should hear alone of victory?
Up through those liquid lashes look, Lampeto; art thou she!"

Then *Lampeto* looked up through her liquid lashes, and, to the astonishment (fortunately mute) of Baba, thus replied:

"I am, I am; thou knowst it. Where fiercest fall the blows,
Where friends are few and faintest, where thickest stand the foes,
Thou knowst whose foot is firmest, thou knowst whose battle-cry
Far, far beyond the foremost, rings clearest through the sky."

Here the voice of Baba, alarmed by Jenny's unwonted excitement of tone, began to ring out pretty clearly, as if in illustration. The spectators, who had at first been all for *Lampeto*, would have veered round to *Thalestris* (as a female substitute for *Herod, King of the Jews*,) had not *Lampeto* been too quick for them:

"It is not well to taunt me. See here, upon my brow,
The Scythian's brand fell moons ago, and ye would think but now.
Ay, and methinks not always are those blue eyes so tame,
When the wild war-note waketh the slumber of their flame;
Ay, and not always thus, too, with supplicating hands.
When the Albanian comest, the waster of our lands,
Who of their crested chieftains, who of their mailèd men,
Has seen this right arm raised to strike, and sought his home again?"

Here Grace raised her right hand, which, with a very deadly weapon in it, might possibly have harmed a mouse, and drew down quite a tornado of applause. Everybody said that "they had no idea it was in her" to express herself so forcibly and look so fierce, except Uncle John, who muttered something about "all women having a temper of their own," which happily was drowned in plaudits. But now it was the turn of *Thalestris* to cut in again, who had been meanwhile very successful in reducing Baba to silence by a terrific shaking of her spear:

"Now 'tis in truth my daughter; thus should she always speak."

"Heavens!" thought I, but I said nothing—

"Now can I mark her father well on her brow and cheek."

"That's good," said Jack; "so can I."

"More—tell me more, I pray thee. Again he's at my side—
His love-moods and his vengeance, his passion and his pride.
I see the captive armies watching without his tent;
The haughtiest look is humbled, the proudest neck is bent.
I see the broken armies, their noblest chiefs in chains,
Their bravest with the vultures upon Arbela's plains,
And his own warriors round him, swift at his beck and call,
And that fierce stamp that shakes their souls—ay, I can see it all.

"Nay, mother, nay; thou dost but see thy daughter and her child.
Proud words flow free and fast enough when wrong drives woman wild.
There are no warriors here, mother, but these two tiny hands
Have far more force with Lampeto than all the Grecian bands."

And after a few more lines, finding *Thalestris* still implacable, she drew a jewelled dagger (the hire of which, I afterward noticed, was the exact price of an attorney's letter, namely, six-and-eightpence) and stabbed Baba among his flannels. With the trifling exception of the child himself, who resented his own assassination beyond measure, the performance was a complete success, and my nephew Tom, who wrote the charade, came in for his full share of congratulation. He had evidently, it was agreed, a talent for domestic

drama, and some one suggested aloud that it was quite a pity he didn't write for the stage. Tom looked at Jack, expecting an outburst of disapprobation; but his uncle only nodded and said he could see no harm in *that*, so long as nothing he wrote was accepted. "I have known a young man to write for the stage for years," were his words, "and not be a penny the worse for it"; which I very well knew was a sly hit at me, who had had a few plays in manuscript for an indefinite period, though the fact was only known to some friends of my early days, and I should have been very sorry (from a professional point of view) had it got abroad.

There was a good deal of talk about the charade, both then and afterward, but it had been played at New Year time, when diversions of all kinds abound, and it was taken by our friends very much as a matter of course. "Months rolled on," as the story-tellers say, and I flattered myself that the excitement created by *Thalestris* and *Lampeto* (not to mention Baba) had died out; that the girls, though proud of the success that had attended their first dramatic effort a year ago, were content to rest upon their laurels; and that I should hear no more upon the subject, at all events in connection with the small end of the wedge.

I confess I had taken some measures for self-defence by earnestly observing that, after what I had seen of the fuss and trouble caused by the getters-up of a mere charade, it seemed to me that people must go mad before they allowed their back drawing-rooms to be turned into a stage; and that, while I had not much to say against the Amazonian affair, I thought the less young ladies exhibited themselves in other characters than their own before spectators, the more highly men of sense—and means—would be likely to regard them; but these precautions seemed to be unnecessary. I was at ease and unsuspecting as Adam in the garden—indeed, I was reading the evening paper after dinner—when Eve appeared one evening, in the person of my Julia, and caused my fall.

"My dear husband," said she, "I have come upon quite a treasure"; and with that she handed me, not

an apple, but a little rolled-up manuscript, dim with the rust of ages, which I presently recognized as one of my almost-forgotten plays. It was called "The Deputy," and though I do not say of it as the famous Scudéry did of his "Arminius," "It is a masterpiece; and if my labor could ever deserve a crown, I would crown it for this work," I must confess it was a very pretty little thing, and would have been worth a good many crowns to a discerning manager.

"Why, where on earth did you find it?" inquired I, not displeased to see this offspring of my youth.

"In the old cabinet in the library, my dear, along with several others. As it was a wet day, I read it to the girls this morning, and they were perfectly *charmed* with it."

"They are good girls," said I, "and sensible girls; girls of considerable taste and culture. Some of the other plays were far from bad, too, if I remember right."

"They were all excellent, my dear, but we like 'The Deputy' best. It is so witty, and runs so pleasantly. And how admirably we all thought it would go off on the stage!"

"If it ever got on there, I dare say it would," said I dryly.

"It ought to be acted," mused my wife; "it really ought." And there the matter dropped—for about five minutes. Then in came Jenny with, "Oh, papa, I have such a capital plan in my head about your beautiful play! There are two lady characters in it which would just suit me and Grace; and the third, the leading one, seems really written for Rose Symonds—if we can only get her to do it. Why should we not play it at home?"

Now, as I have said, I had the greatest objection to private theatricals in a general way. I think they make young ladies who act in them, to say the least of it, conspicuous; and they are also often objectionable in themselves. But, on the other hand, here was a play of my own, really in every way admirable; and what could be more fitting and, indeed, filial, than that

my own daughters and Rose Symonds (who had a magnificent figure, and would look the heroine to perfection,) should see what they could make of it, before a few friends, and strictly, as it were, within the home circle? The whole thing, put in that light, seemed a very pleasant notion, and I wrote a few lines to Tom, who frequented the theatres a good deal, to ask him to help us. I also thought it right to inform my brother Jack, being Baba's godfather, the girls' only unmarried uncle, and having a pretty penny of his own, what we had in contemplation.

"Dear uncle," was Tom's reply, "I'm your man for anything, from the Emperor of Morocco to the Second Robber; and I know two eligible young gentlemen who will make themselves useful or ornamental, as required."

I thought his note flippant, considering that the play had been forwarded to him, and had no Emperor of Morocco or robbers in it at all; but I was willing to look over that in consideration of his services.

My brother's reply—which he wrote in pencil from the Bench of Justice—was even less satisfactory:

DEAR JIM:—I wish you luck with your theatricals. Did I not tell you that that charade would be "the small end of the wedge?" I've got a fellow here for burglary with violence who began with adulteration. It's the same story.

Yours affectionately,

JACK.

II. THE THICK END.

I don't deny that Jack's letter gave me an uncomfortable impression of having been, so to speak, "taken in and done for" by my wife and the girls; but it was not the first time (nor the fiftieth) that the thing had happened, and it only remained for me to keep the damage within limits. In this there was, however, some difficulty, as I could not but agree with the argument that "it was a pity so admirable a play should be witnessed by only a score of people, and those one's own relatives and belongings, who are notoriously the least appreciative of audiences." And yet, the larger

the number of spectators the more extensive must needs be the preparations to receive them. Somehow or other, a hundred and fifty got invited, although I objected to them literally inch by inch; for, if they all came, it seemed to me that there would be much less room for each of them than is usually allotted for the adult human body.

"Oh, I'll manage that," cried Julia confidently, "if the expense does not alarm you. You would not wish them to have a stand-up supper, I suppose?"

"No," said I simply, "certainly not; they will come here for an intellectual gratification. Give them tea and toast, and perhaps some coffee and ice."

"Tea and toast!" echoed Julia disdainfully. "I am really astonished at you, my dear James. We have always had some name for hospitality. They must have supper, of course. The question is, whether it should be only a stand-up one."

"Why, they can't have a lie-down one, surely, like the Romans, as Jack would say," was my simple and classical reply.

"Now, my dear James, this is a serious question," said my wife reprovingly. "People think nothing of a stand-up supper, where everybody is reaching over everybody else's shoulder," ["Good heavens!" thought I, "what a picture!"] "and scrambling for legs of chicken and scraps of pie. My advice is, if you do give an entertainment of this kind, it should be a good one."

"Well, I suppose it's only a question of chairs," said I. "Let them have chairs."

"Very good; then you consent to a sit-down supper?"

And I may here say at once that this was *not* "the small end of the wedge," but the other end. That supper cost me £70.

"You will give champagne, of course?" continued my wife indifferently. "Supper without champagne would be an anomaly."

"Then our supper will be an anomaly, my dear," said I decisively. "You may put it on the cards of invitation, if you please: 'Private theatricals at 8: anomaly at 11:30.' It will be a novelty, at all events."

"Well, all I can say, James, is, that nobody ever praises anything, however good—and I am sure your play is *excellent*—unless they have champagne afterward. I should be exceedingly sorry that your talents failed to be appreciated for the sake of a few bottles of champagne."

"But at the theatres people praise what they see; and yet—except, perhaps, in the case of newspaper critics—the managers don't give them champagne after it."

"That is true, my dear; but theatres are not a private house. What will be said in our case, (or rather in yours, for I don't care what they say about me; it is your reputation that I am jealous about)—what will they say when they see only claret and sherry on the table, and no long glasses? Why, 'What a pity it is that a man of such transcendent abilities should be so mean!'"

So the champagne was agreed upon. This was a mere detail, though rather an expensive one. The proceedings in other respects were wholesale. The house was literally pulled to pieces. Doors were taken off their hinges, and curtains brought down from everywhere to supply their place. The drawing-room, which was to be the theatre and auditorium, was wrecked; and on the desert waste thus created raised seats were erected. The stage was put up by "skilled workmen," with their usual disregard for the wall-paper, and the chief mirror was smashed by a ladder. They also dawdled over their work to that extent that it got whispered in the neighborhood, among the people that were not asked to the play, that they were obliged to work on Sundays, and that my daughters played sacred airs on the harmonium to drown the noise of the hammers and saws. I was at church myself, and can't say. Indeed, I was very seldom in the house at all, for it had become unbearable. Anarchy reigned everywhere, even in the kitchen, and I was compelled to take my meals at the club.

But all this was nothing to the rehearsals. Miss Rose Symonds, whom we had fixed upon for our leading

lady, had a temper of her own, and drove Tom, who was stage manager, quite frantic with it. She had professed herself willing "to make herself useful in any part," well knowing that she was to act the chief one, but it was found that this meant she wanted to play them all. She wished to cut all the good "bits" out of the speeches of the others and put them into her own, on the ground that they "dwarfed the heroine." Considering that she stood five feet ten in her satin shoes, this assertion was ridiculous. She appropriated even the prologue and the epilogue, which I had secretly intended to have spoken myself. Her egotism was so tremendous that the others quailed before it, like animals before the human eye. Magnificent as she was to look at, the three young men (and of course the two young women) would have wished her a size or two smaller, and a few degrees less beautiful, if by that means she would have become what the stage people called "practicable." Her mother was "an honorable," and she never forgot it.

After one terrible scene (not in my play) Tom came to me in my dressing-room—the only apartment I could now call my own—and protested that he couldn't stand it any longer. He must get somebody else.

"Nonsense," said I; "Miss Symonds is a splendid creature, and exactly corresponds with my conception of the part with which she is intrusted."

"That's all very well," said he; "but you have not got to rehearse with her. Now, if you'll allow me, I know a young lady—an admirably-conducted girl—who is a professional actress; her father is an architect——"

"I don't care what her father is, sir," interrupted I, with indignation. "Do you suppose I will allow a professional actress to appear under this roof with my daughters?"

"She would do your play a deal more justice than this giantess."

"Well, well, that may be; but we must make some sacrifice to principle, Tom."

"Then there is Miss Kemble, daughter of your old friend the Canon, at Exeter and great-grandniece to

the immortal actor of the same name; she has a hereditary talent for the stage, you know, and I think I could persuade her to help us. She is a quick study——"

"A what!"

"Learns her part rapidly, I mean. Now, if I could get her——"

"No, no; it's not to be thought of, Tom. Consider how angry the Symondses would be; and your aunt has a great regard for them. We couldn't give any reason for packing the girl off, except that she was too tall. You must do the best with her you can."

I did carry my point there, and the professional services of Miss Rose Symonds were retained.

Time went on, and with it our gigantic preparations. Pink-and-gold cards of invitation were sent out to the one hundred and fifty people, and they almost all accepted; they always do when there are theatricals, which are hailed with delight as a variation from the eternal round of balls and dinners; and some of them asked permission to bring a friend. I had a thousand dismal apprehensions of failure, but they were swallowed up in the dread of the drawing-room floor giving way, and everybody going to the supper-table (which was underneath) before the proper time. The day before the appointed night arrived, and all was ready; the house looked like a bower. So thickly was it planted with evergreens and flowers (which are rather dear at that time of the year) that I felt like a "Jack in the Green" as I left it for the city that morning. I had not been at the office an hour when a telegram arrived from my wife: "Tom is taken ill; what are we to do?"

I don't know the exact ejaculation I made use of when I read this piece of news, but I noticed that my chief clerk, who was with me at the time, and who belongs to "a serious family," opened his eyes and mouth and threw up his hands like a semaphore; so it is probable that it was something stronger than "Good gracious." The next moment I was in a hansom cab, leaving the telegram behind me, the contents of which subsequently got abroad in the office, and gave rise among the young gentlemen to the ridiculous report

that the illness of a favorite tom-cat had thus upset me. It was not a cat, alas! but a catastrophe.

Tom was "down" with a quinsy sore throat, and a substitute for him was out of the question. My wife and daughters were engaged for the next three hours in writing and telegraphing to put the people off. It was hardly to be expected, with all the care in the world, but that some of the one hundred and fifty would turn up the next night, and very apprehensive we felt as it drew nigh. There was something ghastly in the notion of half a dozen people coming down to our artificial arbor in January to eat a cold supper. It was like a stage picnic; and, indeed, the stage was there, though there was no representation. As luck would have it, however, nobody came, and all the little impromptu jokes we had manufactured to mitigate their disappointment and set them at their ease were thrown away. I wish the supper could have been thrown away, too, for living upon tipsy-cake and boned turkeys, as we had to do for the next fortnight, made frightful havoc with my digestion. However, we got through with it somehow, and Tom recovered from his quinsy.

The appointed day *again* drew near; and on this occasion I had absolutely insisted that every character should have his or her substitute, so that my friends should not be made fools of a second time. My wife (who, like all women, will run any risk) called me a "dear old fidget"; but in this, as I fondly flattered myself, I had my way. Tom assured me that he had placed copies of "The Deputy" in safe hands, and that if either actor or actress should fall ill, a duplicate could be procured at an hour's notice. Only this arrangement, of course, necessitated six more people (the number of characters represented) being asked to the entertainment, and increased the probability of the floor giving way. I was well pleased to find that my wife and I were to stand in the doorway of the drawing-room to receive our guests, for *underneath that there was a joist.*

Now, it would not be credited by persons who are unacquainted with the female character, but upon the

very morning of the day that my play was to be acted, and when she knew that everything depended upon her keeping all right, that abominable girl Rose Symonds must needs go to the Belgravian Rink and break her leg. If she had broken her neck—which, considering her weight and size, was likely enough—she could not have done worse, so far as we were concerned. The news came just as our little company were getting ready for the morning rehearsal, and a pretty commotion it caused.

"However," said I, "thank goodness and my foresight, you have made sure of a substitute, Tom; so take a cab and fetch her."

"My dear James," said my wife, turning very pale, "the lady we thought of was Miss Kemble, of Exeter."

"Then telegraph for her immediately, and prepay a reply." I was in that state of mind when it is dangerous for even a man's wife to contradict him; and Tom started off at once.

In half an hour he brought back the message: "Will come up in time, and quite prepared."

I almost burst into tears at the relief, and felt so mollified toward the authoress of our calamity as to express a hope that it would not be necessary to cut her leg off higher than the ankle.

Fortunately, Tom had thought of ascertaining the new performer's height in inches—and even round the waist—and Miss Rose's stage costume was altered accordingly to suit her. None of us, as it happened, had seen Miss Kate Kemble since she was a child, but she had given promise of good looks, so that we all hoped for the best. I am bound to say that she proved to be very satisfactory in that respect. She arrived just in time for one dress rehearsal, and was received with open arms; indeed, I was so charmed with her prompt proceedings, and also touched with the remembrance of my old friendship for her father the Canon, that I gave her a parental kiss, at which I saw Tom snigger. I confess I didn't ask much after her father, but then, there was no time for anything but business—that is, stage business. She was to sleep at her aunt's house

in town and return to Exeter the next day. She had really got up her part extremely well and looked the character to perfection. She had not so grand an appearance as the Symonds, but she had ten times her vivacity. I could see that Tom vastly preferred her to the other, and of course he was the best judge; but it struck me that my wife and daughters were a little stiff with her, which, considering the great obligation we were under, I thought very bad taste, and therefore I made up for it all I could. Curiously enough, whenever I made myself agreeable to the poor girl I saw Tom snigger. But nothing made much impression upon me at that time, my mind being monopolized with the drama and the instability of the drawing-room floor.

Modesty forbids me to say more of the performance of "The Deputy" than that it was a complete success. The actors did every justice to the play, especially Miss Kemble, who was perfectly self-possessed, and, as Tom observed, "fairly drew down the house." I replied that I was very glad to say she didn't, though I have reason to believe, from the cracks that afterward appeared in the dining-room ceiling, that she was within a very little of doing it. Everything went off well, including the audience; and when I put Kate Kemble, who was the last to go, into her cab, I could really have found it in my heart to kiss her, only that Tom stood by with that eternal snigger. However, I spoke of her to my wife and the girls as she deserved to be spoken of, and I am bound to say that they allowed that she had acted to perfection. Perhaps she had put the girls a little into the shade, but they had plenty of praise for their own share and, on the whole, we had all cause to congratulate ourselves. Everybody had said (after the champagne) that, if "The Deputy" was not put upon the stage, it would be a loss to the metropolis, though if it was so, it could not possibly be better acted than it had been under our humble roof.

You may imagine, perhaps, good reader, that there is nothing more to be told; but I am sorry to say you are mistaken. The success of my dramatic trifle gave

me a temporary interest in the theatres, and I attended them more than once. On one occasion, when my own people happened to be going out to a concert (a thing I detest), I asked Tom to dine with me at the club, and afterward to go to the play.

"What play is it on which you have set your affections?" asked Tom, as we were discussing our fish.

"Oh," said I, "I have got two stalls for the Variety; there's a very pretty piece, they tell me, going on there."

"Oh, I don't think you'll like *that*, uncle," observed Tom, turning very pale.

"What's the matter?" said I, thinking the salmon was disagreeing with him.

"Well, I don't think that play will please you. I think we'd better go somewhere else."

"Stuff and nonsense! It's a very proper play. Old Dudgeon told me he had taken his wife and family to see it, and I am sure he is particular enough."

"You'll do as you please," replied Tom, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Of course I shall," said I; and we went.

It was a lively play enough—though certainly without the wit of "The Deputy"; but the remarkable point about it was one of the players.

"Why, bless my soul and body!" cried I, as the heroine entered, "that's Miss Kate Kemble!"

"No, no," said Tom; "she's only very like her; it's an accidental coincidence."

But I saw her distinctly give a nod of recognition to Tom and an unmistakable smile to me.

"Good heavens!" said I; "I shall never forgive myself, Tom, if that poor girl's success at our house should have induced her to go upon the stage in defiance of her family. What must the Canon think of his old friend——"

"My dear uncle, she has nothing to do with the Canon," interrupted Tom, struggling with an inward convulsion of laughter. "She is a very good girl, but she is a professional actress, and not Miss Kemble at all. Of course, we could not have procured *her* services

at a moment's notice, even if we had bespoken them, which we had not thought it worth while to do. You were right, of course, as you always are, uncle; but we did not take the precautions you suggested. When the Symonds broke her leg, there was nothing for it but to engage yonder excellent young woman, which, accordingly, I did. I told my aunt and the girls all about it, but we thought it best not to tell *you;* for though the young lady is highly respectable, and her father's an architect, you might have made objections."

"You abominable young scoundrel," said I, "how dared you do such a thing?"

"Well, I thought anything was preferable to making a failure of your excellent play. There has been no harm done, after all; though, under the circumstances, it was a misfortune that your old friendship with her supposed father, the Canon, should have carried you to—at least I think I saw you——"

"Dear me!" said I, growing red all over, "so I did; I really believe I kissed her. Well, well, let bygones be bygones, and don't let us say anything more about it to anybody!"

So I forgave Tom, upon the understanding that he should never tell; and my wife and the girls do not know to this hour that *I* know how shamefully they tricked me; and, above all, my brother Jack doesn't know, or else I should never hear the last of the "small end of the wedge," and what came of our private theatricals.

In this beautiful tale of a good but superstitious peasant, lies a parable,—the giving up of a principle for love, which many a man, under the spell of "pink-and-white tyranny," has done, and then died. This story of "that dear land" is done into English for ROMANCE by Isabel Smithson from the French of Jean Destrem.

THE GUARDIAN PINE-TREE.

DOWN in that dear land, at the southern boundary of which the Pyrenees rise like a wall of blue marble, the houses are always built facing the sunrise, and nearly every one of them has a guardian-tree. Sometimes it is a fig-tree, sometimes a pine or an oak, which grows near the doorway, spreading its heavy branches over the roof as if to protect the household from baneful influences, and from the evil spirits which, the peasants believe, are floating in the air.

Before one of these white houses where lived an honest fellow named Luc Laborde, an immense parasol-pine had shot up majestically to the height of eighty feet or more, and spread its umbrella-shaped branches just under the clouds, giving its name to Laborde's cottage, which was known as "The Parasol." The great pine could be seen from every part of the parish, and the birds which migrate in the Autumn perched fearlessly on its boughs, feeling quite safe so far from the pursuit of men.

This tree brought good fortune to the house. Luc Laborde, the young heir, who was still a bachelor, was almost rich; his crops flourished; his granaries were full; his cattle were fat and healthy, and no contagious disease had ever attacked the inmates of the cottage, thanks to the patriarchal vigilance of the pine-tree, whose purifying branches constantly diffused a wholesome fragrance.

II.

"You have a fine tree," said Cazade, the carpenter, who had recently installed himself in the next house to Laborde's. "I will give you a hundred francs for it."

He was a stranger in the country, and did not understand the veneration felt for the guardian-tree; therefore Luc forgave him.

A year later, the same carpenter said to his neighbor:

"It is unbearable. Your tree overshadows my orchard, and all my apple-trees are dying. More than that, the roots of your ridiculous pine are upsetting the stone wall; I warn you, my lad, if you will not sell me your tree, I will burn it down."

Luc Laborde rolled up his sleeves, spat on his palms energetically, after the Gascoigne custom, and prepared to send the insolent fellow back to his own house without further argument. He was just going to attack him furiously, when a frightened voice—such a sweet voice was never heard—cried suddenly,

"Help, help, he will kill my father!" A young girl with a flushed face appeared, and Luc stopped, disarmed by the flute-like tones of Mamzelle Louise Cazade, for his ears were accustomed only to the lowing of cattle, and the sweet sounds gave him a strange sensation, making him think of sugar and vanilla.

III.

An afternoon in the spring-time. The parasol-pine was putting forth new shoots, which looked like soft green fingers slyly trying to steal the sunbeams that fell around. The breeze, evidently charmed by the sight, sang a joyous song round the top of the tree; it was a special purring sound which is never heard excepting in pine-trees, and which still echoes in the ears of the Landois peasants when they are exiles in distant cities.

Under the great tree a woman's form was seen, against the sunset, stooping furtively to gather up the dried twigs, and Laborde hurried out, as was his duty, to accost the trespasser. When she saw him, she trembled visibly and stammered with fright.

"I—I beg your pardon—I wanted—I will give them back."

It was Louise, the carpenter's daughter. Thinking

that no one would see her, she had been picking up small branches with which to kindle her fire.

"Here they are, Sir," she said, blushing hotly as she opened her apron and held the stolen treasures toward him. Luc felt his heart leap as he looked at the girl, for her eyes shone like rising stars.

"Oh, keep them, keep them," he said generously, "and if you want any more, here are plenty," and he stooped and picked up a great armful of the twigs; then, breathing very hard, laid them gently in her apron.

"Pray take them——" he began, but started suddenly for—quite accidentally—the tip of her finger touched his hand, and while the pine-tree, which had been the cause of this meeting, was humming roguishly, Luc Laborde ran away without another word, as if he had touched a red-hot iron.

IV.

As was to be expected, a few days later, the old tree saw the two young people meet on the same spot, and this time they were less timid, and more neighborly.

One evening, when the dying sunlight was reddening the tips of the pine's branches as if with a starry kiss, Luc made bold to say to the pretty Louise, "I love you." This with a wretched French accent, but so tenderly!

The next morning he stood, cap in hand, and with bowed head, before the carpenter, making a formal proposal of marriage, while the pine-tree sang a *Magnificat.*

"Why, you don't mean it! Of course, my good fellow, I shall be delighted," exclaimed the reconciled neighbor, with unfeigned satisfaction, for, to say truth, he knew that Luc was well-to-do.

The next minute, however, he winked meaningly and said in a whisper:

"There is one condition. You must let me cut down that stupid tree of yours."

This Luc refused. The carpenter insisted upon his absurd condition, but the young man would not give in;

he loved Louise, and was he to destroy the old tree, the father of their mutual affection? Never!

After that he thought more of the pine than ever, and put an iron screen round its trunk, so that the wagon-wheels should not scratch or bruise it. One of his ancestors had planted that tree hundreds of years ago, Luc's grandfather had cared for it tenderly, and a swarm of bees had made their home in its venerable trunk, rendering it still more sacred. Besides all this, Luc was afraid to touch the pine-tree, for one of his forefathers had once determined to cut it down, and had been rebuked for his ingratitude. Just as he struck his axe against one of the roots which was sticking out like a great toe, a mad bull came rushing toward him and would have killed him if he had not clambered up the tree's trunk. The old pine knew how to avenge itself, and it would surely demolish the house in its fall if ever a Laborde were base enough to lay a sacrilegious finger on it.

"Ha, ha! You are ridiculous," laughed the carpenter when Luc confessed his fears, and then he added contemptuously, "I would not give you my daughter now on any condition. You are too great an idiot."

The young man shuddered and went back to his own house.

V.

A few days later, Luc Laborde saw another man, cap in hand, enter Cazade's house just as he had done, and he knew it was a rival suitor.

"He is asking for Louise," he said, glaring ferociously at the pine-tree. That evening, when the wind was saying tender words to the branches, Louise, pale and pensive, looked imploringly toward Luc, but he saw nothing but the patriarchal pine, and went into his house shivering as if snow had fallen upon his heart.

He could no longer eat nor sleep, and he grew thinner every day. He neglected his crops and gathered but poor harvests, he became morose and spoke roughly to his cattle, and when he chanced to hear Louise's voice,

he started as if it were the sound of a cannon. The other young man continued to go to Cazade's house.

"Perhaps I am an idiot," said Luc.

One night he heard Louise weeping in the orchard; another time, he plainly distinguished the sound of kissing. At that he sprang to his feet, his hair on end, and on seeing his rival leave Cazade's house, he rushed in exclaiming, "Cut it down—I give it to you!" and sank breathless into a chair.

It was not too late. Louise could still be Madame Laborde, and she cried for joy.

The pine-tree was cut down a few days later, Cazade superintending the work. Four great ropes were fastened to the tree, and two men with bared arms attacked it with alternate strokes of their heavy axes.

Luc stood near tremblingly, watching the murderous assault, and at every stroke he winced, as though his own flesh had received the blow. But the great tree stood erect, without a quiver, while bits of red and yellow wood spouted like blood from its gaping wounds, and spread a resinous, health-giving fragrance around its murderers.

An hour, two hours, three hours passed, and still the axes rose and fell, and still the tree resisted. Luc Laborde was bathed in a cold sweat, for, though he had witnessed the death of his father and grandfather, he had never known such anguish.

All at once, the pine-tree began to murmur, at first with a vague almost inaudible sound, then more distinctly and with ever-increasing volume until its voice became so sad and reproachful that it made one shudder. The tree was weeping. Luc stopped his ears; now at every stroke of the axe it started convulsively, as if in agony, and began to totter.

"Run, run, it will crush us!" cried Luc, starting away, for he thought the dying giant meant to overwhelm in its fall the pigmies who dared to attack it. Uttering a last long cry, it swayed grandly, then making a great sound with its branches, fell, with a noise like the breaking of bones.

"You see, simpleton, it did not hurt you," said the carpenter with a heartless laugh.

VI.

On the day of the wedding, the pine-tree lay where it had fallen, its trunk motionless, its branches limp, and no disaster followed. A year later, when Luc found himself the father of a beautiful rosy doll whose innocent glances were like sunlight in his heart, the corpse of the pine-tree, which lay drying up in the father-in-law's wood-shed, gave no sign of interfering.

Three months passed, the old tree was sawn into huge fragrant joists, and then a strange rumor spread abroad. A Spaniard had come across the mountains bringing the cholera with him, and three persons of the village had fallen victims. Luc felt his hair stand up with terror. Where now was the guardian-tree which had always kept off baneful influences with its broad, salubrious branches? Soon there was a case of cholera close by. "Heaven protect us from the pine-tree's vengeance!" thought Luc, and he hurried into his father-in-law's workshop, exclaiming:

"Give me a few planks of the tree. I will make a bedstead. That will protect us."

"I have used up that wood," replied Cazade, "except these few pieces."

"What are you making of them?" asked the young man, and the other answered:

"Can you not see—it is a coffin."

Luc uttered a cry and fell forward, and twenty-four hours after, the last of the Labordes was laid in that long box.

"Cholera," said the doctor, but no one believed him, for every one knew better, down in that dear land where the Pyrenees rise like a wall of blue marble!

There is sometimes more delicacy in the matter of matrimony among the lowly than among the aristocracy. Thus the conduct of "Arizony" and her lover in the following story by William Perry Brown might convey a moral to certain English noblemen and American heiresses.

ARIZONY.

MANY people wondered why Parson Kimbro did not marry. For twenty years he had ministered to the spiritual interests of Choogaloo, of Short Bark, of the Long Ridge—rude settlements snugly stowed away amid the corrugated spurs of the North Carolina mountains. His spare form and severe features, bent over his shambling, one-eyed gray pony, had been a familiar sight to the wayfarers of that rugged region so long that even the "worldin's," who scoffed at religious fervor and laughed at his antique, ascetic habits, would have missed the sight of him more than they cared to confess.

He never asked pay for his work. If any chose to give, he accepted; if naught was forthcoming, he labored on and gave no sign, except in prayerful confession that his labors were all too feeble—his unworthiness too great—for God's forbearance in allowing him to live, and love, and labor, and endure—among his chosen people. He was self-searching, narrow-minded, dogmatic, somewhat bigoted in doctrine, yet somehow lovable; caring, over all, less for his own comfort and success than for the eternal welfare of others.

He lived in a small house on Choogaloo Creek, unattended, save by a half-witted young fellow called Pack, who cooked for him, and in his absence bothered the neighbors by his unexpected appearances and semi-idiotic chatter.

One day there came a letter addressed in a zig-zag hand to "Mr. Lem Kimbro." The Parson took it from the office at Tormey's store and placed it carefully in his hat. After supper that night, with his pipe

alight, his legs stretched before the fire and Pack snoring in bed, he opened and read it. Though deemed "terrible smart" by many of his flock, he was almost as a babe in the wilderness, amid the intricacies of pen-craft. He deciphered each word slowly, with an effort that wrinkled his forehead and made his old eyes ache:

"Deerfoot, texas janooerry forth 188—

Mister Lem Kimbro dear frend. I takes my pen in hand tu let yu no I am well and hopin these fu lines will find yu the same. I am cummin back home agin I am tirde ov livin out heer and I want you tu git the old house reddy fur me. I want yu tu du this fur the sake ov old times.

from missis Arizony Adkins tu Mister Lem Kimbro at Chugylu Crick."

The Parson laid the letter down, pushed his glasses up and gazed musingly on the fire. His brow, severely bent at first, gradually relaxed, and his lips—usually compressed and rigid—wreathed themselves into an expression almost tender and womanish. After awhile his face hardened again as he said, half aloud:

"I wonner why she di'n't make Mose write? She don' ax nary word erbout Pack, 'nd him her own born'd brother. 'Nd yit—she mout think he wuz dead, 'nd yit—ef she do, why di'n't she ax atter 'im, 'nd him all the livin' kin she hev got ez I knows on?"

He dismissed this query under the succeeding influence of fonder retrospections.

"She wuz mons'ous pert 'nd lively, she wuz. In them thar yurs of vanity I useter think the hull worl' didn' hol' ez takin' a gal ez Arizony Farner. I 'memmer one time, at some Krismus doin's down ter her pap's, when she w'ndn't let old man b'ar kiss 'er. Then I pulls up the head 'nd I tole 'er ole man b'ar wuz Sandy Claws 'nd Sandy Claws wuz me; 'nd she put up 'er mouth ez nateral—jist ez nateral ez tho' my a kissin' of 'er wuz w'at she'd all'ays egspected. 'Nd now Mose Adkins hev married 'er yurs 'nd yurs ago."

Could it be that somewhere in this early past lay the secret of Parson Kimbro's present unwedded isolation? A preacher without a wife—Choogaloo did not approve of it and had often reminded him of his deficiency in

that respect. He now reproached himself for giving way to these reminiscences of his unregenerate past.

"I'm afeerd, when hit comes ter the reel pull, I yain' got no more strenk nur backbone ergin the devil than some o' them thar Mefferdiss over at Short Bark; not but w'at they sorter tries in thur youn blin' way ter git true grace, but when one starts out on the wrong trail, sech strivin' is a good deal like mendin' a small hole by rippin' a bigger one. However, they yain' Babtiss, 'nd I reckin they can't hope sech doins."

The perversities of the Short Bark Methodists always made the Parson unamiable when he thought of them. He therefore withdrew from this stone-throwing into his own glass-house, by saying, with true humility:

"Wal, wal; thurs wus Christyuns than Mefferdiss, 'nd ef the hul troof wuz known, I'm afeerd I'm one on 'em sometimes. But Arizony Adkins now—why I haint heerd that much on 'er before in a many a year. I mos' wish she'd nuver writ, tho' I reckin' I'se hatter look atter the house fur 'er. I wonner ef she ever furgot how we—how I useter keer fur 'er?"

Here the Parson, as though ashamed of this reflection, rose abruptly, laid Arizony's letter between the leaves of his Bible, carefully "kivered up" the fire, and went to bed.

There were various surmises on Choogaloo Creek as to the purport of Arizony's proposed return. A few old ones chuckled a little over her writing to Parson Kimbro—remembering dimly, how he, when "young and foolish," had fallen a willing victim to the girl's fresh and blooming beauty. The general inference was that Arizony and her husband must have had good luck in Texas, and were returning home to air their prosperity before the eyes of Choogaloo. Choogaloo did not object, though considering itself and its own ways as good as those of any one else.

"I reckin the man she run'd off long of 'nd married 'nd ez tuk 'er out thar mus' hev made a mint o' money," said Aunt Salomy Witt to her husband. Aunt Salomy was a leader of local gossip.

The "Widder Stickney," who had been one of Arizony's schoolmates, wondered if Mose were yet alive. She remembered that she had "sorter sot 'er own cap fur 'im," but had been cut out by Arizony's superior attractiveness. Though she had since acquired and buried two helpmates of her own, her vanity still lazily reproached her when she heard the news that now brought back so many memories of the past.

The Parson—at first grumbling over the trouble of repairing the old Farner house, soon found a sad kind of pleasure in the task, as his mind bred reminiscent fancies that quickened tenderly under the congenial labor of his hands.

"Pack," he said, for the twentieth time, as that grinning aid handed up covering boards, while the Parson —on the roof—was stopping sundry leaks, "does ye know yere own born'd sister air a-comin' back ter see ye?"

Pack laughed and jabbered in a language peculiar to himself.

"Wal, she is; 'nd tho' she didn' edzacky say so in 'er letter—I reckin Mose Adkins'll turn up erlong with 'er. You'll be hevin' so many rich relashuns a-pilin' on ye, Pack, I'm afeerd ye won' wanter be keepin' house fur me much longer. Bit thass all eright, boy; ye've be'n master good, seein' how leetle sense the Lord hev' seen fittin' ter bless ye with; 'nd I hope Arizony 'nd her man 'll do a better part by ye 'n I've reely be'n able to, all these yurs."

Pack again laughed, as though he viewed his own lack of sense solely in a humorous light, but ignored the allusion to Arizony entirely.

"Poor fool!" muttered the Parson, "I mout a knowed he w'u'dn' 'memmer 'er, when hits more'n he kin do at dinner ter tell w'at he cooked up fur breakfus. He wur master small 'nd puny, too, when Arizony rund erway long o' that thar Mose. Here, Pack—you trot over ter the house 'nd make on a fire fur dinner. I'll be erlong ez soon ez I gits this chimley jam stopped up. To be shore—to be shore! A patchin' up thish yer old cabin keeps my mind pestered long o' them thar

days 'nd them thar noshuns. Somehow I caint git shet of em. Hyur I is a cooterin eroun' ole Farner's cabin fur Arizony, ez wuz ter a married me bit run'd erway long o' Mose Adkins; 'nd now theys both a comin' back—like ernuff with a remshun o' money. I don' see ef thur so rich, w'at they wants ter patch up this ole' shack fur. Prehaps hits ter do em 'twill they kin put up a better one."

The Parson slowly slid down the roof, dropped to the ground and went inside. The aspect of the dingy room reminded him strongly of its past association with the early love dream of his life—long sternly buried—yet, of late, stirring in its sepulchre, despite his resolve and his self-reprehension. A bed and some chairs had been brought over by kindly neighbors. The parson, with a womanly care he felt half ashamed of, had taken from his own house bedding, dishes, and his only looking-glass, with one of his two tables.

"They won't think much on 'em, I reckin'," he thought, "but they'll do 'em twell they hev time ter buy better ones. Lemme see! Wuz hit on that side of the fire place 'er on thish yur, ez I fus' tole Arizony how I—wal—yes—how I keered fur her? I b'lieve she wuz a-settin' thar—'nd I wuz erbout hyur." The Parson placed himself on the identical spot, and one might have fancied he still saw some lingering sign of Arizony's long vanished presence. "Hit wuz way over yonder, by the bed, ez she finally tole me yes; 'nd thar's whur I hugged 'nd kissed 'er when old Farner com'd in 'nd caught me. I wuz plum skeer'd, bit the old man, he unly larfed. Old Farner tuk ter me, he did, 'nd he nat'rally hated Mose. 'Nd then—'nd then—" the Parson's tones, after all these years, shook a little, "the very nex' night bit two atter that, she run'd off long o' Mose Adkins, 'nd I hain't seen er heerd of 'er twell that thar letter. Hit air strange ez Mose didn' write it."

He now stood silent—pondering—upon the very spot where, a quarter-of-a-century before, he had told his love. For the time, the usually self-controlled preacher

had vanished—there was only a sad-faced, elderly man, gently grieving over what might have been.

A noise of falling "draw bars" outside interrupted his reverie. Then steps, that sounded timid and hesitating, came across the yard, the door slowly opened, and a faded, worn-looking woman stood peering within. The Parson was behind a corner of the fireplace; she did not at first see him. She looked fearfully around, as though dreading some unwonted appearance, and closed the door behind her without turning. This rendered the Parson visible as he stood wondering, and a well-worn satchel dropped from her hands as she again grasped the door-latch in alarm. He at once came forward.

"I reckin yore a stranger erbout hyur," he said. "Wat kin I do fur ye?"

The woman, after another rapid glance around, replied:

"I tho't this—isn't this the old Farner house?"

"To be shore—w'at thur air lef' of it. We'uns hev be'n a-patchin' it up a leetle fer Mose Adkins 'nd his wife, bit I mus' low hit ain't har'ly wuth the truble."

"Hit air all I hev lef' now wuth comin' to," she said with a weary sigh, and—as her face turned sideways, while the window light sharpened a profile, fair indeed, yet sorely accentuated by time and suffering—the Parson's heart gave a great throb; lump after lump rose in his throat, blocking his utterance for a moment. Then he half whispered: "Arizony!"

The woman regarded him intently, and a wan smile parted her lips as she said: "Is that you—Lem Kimbro?"

"Whar's Mose?" inquired the Parson, feeling incapable of adequately expressing his sense of the forlornness of her arrival and looks.

"Mose died three yur 'er more back. Didn' you all hyur on it?"

"How could we when you 'uns never writ nuthin'?"

"I tole 'em ter write; bit ez I never got no answer, I just tho't ye'd all never furguv the way me 'nd Mose lef' hyur, 'nd I w'u'dn' write no more 'twell—'twell I had ter."

"We'uns didn' git no letter ez I riccorlick on," he replied, "'twell ye writ tother day."

So this was Arizony—worn, faded, homeless, and alone—driven, doubtless by necessity rather than inclination, back to the home of her childhood. Had Parson Kimbro felt that the past still owed him satisfaction, he might have smiled at the slow revenge of time. As it was, a deep sense of pity was sheathing his heart from selfish retrospection; and in contrasting what she had been with what she was now, his kindly bosom stirred with strange yearnings—not so much loverlike as those of a parent for a prodigal child.

He had thought to behold her ride up—still blooming and buxom—with Mose, who would doubtless be well preserved and prosperous—both of them overflowing with good spirits and the lucre of the great west. He had dwelt upon their return as being more bright and dramatic than their flight had been dark and semi-tragic.

Choogaloo would applaud, and all ears be filled with cheering gossip of their strange career—ending gloriously where it had gloomily begun—at old Farner's, who had "cussed" Mose often enough in his own lifetime.

"I see," she said, after a somewhat oppressive silence, "that you'uns did fix up a leetle for me. I all'ays knowed ye hed a kind heart, Lem, 'nd that hoped me up ter send that thar letter. I didn't know nary soul yelse ter trouble 'cepn' you."

"Wal, wal, Arizony," the Parson recovered his severe balance with an effort, "that wuz all right. We—that is, I—weren't able ter do much. An ole bachler like me yain' fittin' ter do much in the way of house-fixin'. But such ez hit is—" he hesitated, yet resolved then and there that Arizony should keep these few things, though he had to secretly buy those not his own, "Ahem! such ez hit is——"

"'Nd ye never married, then," she said sadly.

"No, Arizony; I tuk ter preachin', 'nd somehow I didn' keer ter. Marryin' 'nd sarvin' the Lord didn' seem ter work together fer me after you left. Not bit

w'at you did right, tho', in takin' the man of yore own ch'ice. I hopes Mose wur good ter ye, Arizony."

"I dunno—I reckin he tried to be—for a while—bit—I'm master tired, Lem—seems like I'll hatter to sit down."

She sank into a chair, while the Parson suddenly remembered that she might be hungry.

"Thass right," he said, "res' yourse'f a bit, 'nd 'member, yore in yore own house now. I'll sen' Pack over with some dinner, 'nd the women folks 'll be a-commin' in when they hyurs yore hyur. You hain' furgot Pack, hev ye, Arizony?"

"My poor brother! Whose be'n a-keerin' fer 'im all this yer time?"

"He made out ter stay long o' me atter yore pap died."

"Ah me! Lem Kimbro, yo've be'n a-heapin' coals of fire on my sinful head fur yurs, 'nd I never knowed."

The Parson got out of the house hurriedly, to prevent an open exposure of what he feared was an unwomanly show of sympathy. Arizony sat motionless for a long while, her face kindling with a gentle color, then slowly whitening, until it remained as though carved in marble.

When Choogaloo found out the real facts concerning Arizony's return, the general verdict was that time had served her right. There were a few sympathizers, but gossip is proverbially heartless, when her victims return upon Fortune's reluctant hands, beggared and forlorn.

Arizony, however, quietly settled down, went nowhere, and by the Parson's tact much of her real destitution was veiled from the public eye. According to his resolve, the household goods—not his own—he bought somehow from their owners, encouraging vague inferences that he was using Arizony's money, then settled with his conscience as best he could thereafter. She must have understood, yet she shrank from noticing it otherwise than by a kind of piteous forbearance of words when he was present, which her mournful eyes, following him about, seemed to protest against,

as though making plain that she knew and was thankful, yet dared not shock him by a more effusive show of gratitude.

Pack stayed with her now, and during the Parson's frequent periods of absence the two supervised his household affairs and kept him tidier and more comfortable than ever. Pack accepted his long-lost sister like any other pleasing fact projecting itself into his existence—as a matter to be grinned at, jabbered over and otherwise acceptable.

"Wuz Mose good ter ye?" Parson Kimbro had asked at various times, but Arizony would usually return some evasive answer. One morning, when she was washing down by the spring between their two houses he noticed a long scar above her elbow.

"How did that git thar?" he asked, slightly shocked at such a sign on Arizony's once plump arm, now so spare and brown.

"I dunno'—seems like hit hev always be'n thar," she said, regarding him pensively.

"Hit weren't thar when you wuz a gal, wuz it?"

"Wal then—hit wur an accident, I reckon."

"An acciden'! Arizony, ef thar air enythin' a b'arin' on yur mind, ye hedn' orter keep hit from *me*."

He was more like the old friend and would-be lover now than the sober Parson; but she put up one hand, saying: "What deference kin hit make now? Mose, he done it, but he wuz drunk. Thar now! Don' ye make me say no more ergin 'im—he's dead now."

"No, no—pore child!—but I wish—I jist wish, Arizony—but no! Ye c'udn' nuver think on me like ye onct did—afore Mose comed erlong—c'u'd ye? Seems like I wants ter take kyur on ye wus'n ever now."

Her eyes opened wide, a flush darted to her face, then she drew back, with dripping hands extended warningly.

"No, Lem Kimbro! I'm a-fearin' hit's too late,—everlas'ingly too late fer sech ez that now. Yore a preacher; yore luk'd up to, 'nd the good Lord hev blessed ye—bit—me? What am I? I've made my bed 'nd I mus' lie in it. Don' ye tempt me. Don' ye do

yorese'f sech a onjestice. Let me live on hyur—erlone. I've bro't hit on myse'f, 'nd I don' desarve no better. Let 'em talk erbout me, 'nd wonner 'nd 'spishin—they won't think wus of me than I do of myse'f. Bit ez fur you, Lem, tho' I used ye bad onct, I'm too good a frien' ter ye ter let ye saddle yorese'f with sech a wreck ez I hev gotter be now."

His protestations could not shake her resolution; but, though he went away sorrowing, he championed her cause in the ears of Choogaloo, until Choogaloo turned its battery of tattle upon himself. His own church members began to regard him doubtfully, though, out of respect, none for a while ventured to speak to him of the questionable nature of his position.

Gossip—like a rolling snowball—gathers venom from the very strength of the reputations it assails. The Parson had looked after poor Pack for years; this must have been subtly reprehensible all along, though Gossip had never reasoned it out before. Now he evidently looked after them both—he a single man and a minister. This was doubly wrong, though Gossip captiously failed to see that it might be worse to let them both starve.

Arizony—in her seclusion—soon had a hint as to how the tide was setting. One day the Parson ran over, after one of his monthly trips to Short Bark, with a sack of meal which, said he:

"The bruthern jest made me kerry off, tho' I've got more grist now on hand than I kin use afore hit sours."

Arizony looked at the sack on the floor—at him—and began to silently wring her hands, finally bursting weakly into tears.

"Ye mus'n't—ye mus'n't," she at length sobbed forth. "Does you think I don't know what hit all costs ye, ter be a-keerin' fer me 'nd Pack—not in money erlone, but in sumpin' durer ner money—yore own good name and kerrecter. I done ye one bad turn onct, when I wus young 'nd foolish, bit Lord furbid ez I sh'u'd do ye ernother one!"

"What do ye mean, Arizony?"

"Why, thur a-tellin' hit up 'nd down Choogaloo, that in lukin' atter me 'nd Pack, ye air a-doin' wrong.

They sez wus 'n that; 'nd tho' I yain a-keerin' fur myse'f, I caint stan' hit on yore ercount. Me 'nd Pack hev gotter shift fur ourse'ves."

She spoke doggedly, having ceased crying, though her moist eyes regarded him tenderly, as a mother might have looked upon a dear though wayward child. The Parson drew a long breath, then stepped forward and grasped her hand, though she strove feebly to hinder him.

"Arizony," he said earnestly, "I hev prayed ter God night after night ter keep us both in the strait path. I knows yore condishuns 'nd yore suff'rin's ez nobody else eroun' hyur knows 'em; 'nd while God hevn't show'd me that I'm a-doin' wrong in hopin' you a bit, I hev his word ter tell me I w'u'dn' be a-doin' right ter leave ye in yore trouble. Ef my bruthern see yutherwise—that's thur luk out—not mine. God—He knows my heart, 'nd you knows how I feels towards ye; so don't let what they alls sez erbout me pester ye, Arizony."

"I caint hope it—I caint hope bein' pestered erbout ye." She sighed—looking so wan, frail and pitiful that his eyes grew dim as he replied energetically:

"Thar's jest one right way ter put a stop ter all this yer tale beerin' 'nd folly, 'nd onkindness. Git yore bunnit, Arizony, 'nd we'uns 'll ride over to Squire Gamble's. Thar's no minister nur hyur, bit he'll do. When we gits back, we'uns 'll see if my nabors hain' got respec's ernuff fer thur preacher ter hole thur tongues erbout his wife."

She saw he was thoroughly in earnest, and for a moment she yielded to the sweet relief of contemplating such a haven for herself, yet only to realize, by the after pang of renunciation, how dearly she now loved this faithful friend of her youth.

"No, no!" she cried at length. "For yore own sake don't ye tempt me. I'm not worthy of ye—I didn' do right by ye onct, 'nd I've ben punished—I'm a bein' punished now; hit air right fer it ter be so, 'nd I won't burden ye with the wreck of my pore life. 'Tw'u'd surely be ernuther sin ergin ye."

She turned and fled out of the house, leaving him there, baffled yet not defeated in purpose. A neighbor passing by called to her and tossed a letter over the fence. She picked it up, opened it, more as a relief to her feeling than from curiosity, and began to read. Parson Kimbro, watching her as he slowly followed, was surprised to see her look up presently and turn back with smiles brightening through her tears.

"I druther see ye laugh than cry, Arizony," he said quaintly, as he grasped her hand. "Hev ye tho't better on it?"

"Read that thar," she replied, giving him the letter.

As he bent over it her whole face kindled, and a glow of color again touched her cheeks. It seemed as though Arizony were growing younger all at once.

The letter was from a lawyer in Waco, offering Mrs. Adkins two thousand dollars for a piece of land long recorded there as the property of her deceased husband.

"You nuver sed nuthin erbout this," said he, looking up inquiringly.

"Why, the place wuz so poor me 'nd Mose jist starved out on it, tho' hit wuz powerful nur the town. We lef' it yurs ergo, 'nd I nuver lowd hit w'u'd be wuth much of anythin'."

The Parson reflected. Arizony would now be quite well off, according to the primitive ideas of Choogaloo. He himself was poor in comparison. If she had declined his offer before—though on generous, self-abnegative principles—was it likely she would want to marry him now? He was old, grayheaded, rich only in an eternal hope not of this world. He drew gently back, and his face saddened, though not unkindly.

"Wal, Arizony," he said, "I'm powerful glad of thish yer—fur yore sake—'nd yit——"

He hesitated. How could he give up this sweet revival of his youthful hope—this fresh rekindling of his early and only earthly love? Arizony—watching him—seemed to divine his thoughts. She stepped forward and stretched out her hand.

"Lem," she said, then looked down in sweet confusion, withdrawing her hand and twisting her fingers to-

gether awkwardly. "Perhaps I won't be such a burden to ye now, atter all—ef—ef——"

"Arizony," he cried, and gazed upon her as one fearing, yet striving, to understand.

With another swift movement she buried her face in her hands for an instant, then looked at him. Ah! the eyes of these sad-faced mountain women! Though all else about them be trite and commonplace, a touch of the haven they wearily sigh for often glasses itself there at moments like these.

The Parson read his dumb answer truly, and held out his arms. Arizony nestled there shrinkingly, yet fondly, and felt that the rest she had so long despaired of had come to her at last.

Late that afternoon two of the deacons of the Choogaloo Baptist Church, coming up the road, saw Parson Kimbro and Arizony standing together before the minister's gate. They approached slowly, with sober faces and an air of embarrassment.

"Parson," said Brother McJenkin, the senior deacon of the Church, "at our las' church meetin' ez we'uns hilt when you wuz over ter the Long Ridge, me 'nd Brother Spadden hyur was 'pinted ter wait on ye ter—a—ahem!—wal, w'at we hev gotter say, Parson, air fur yore y'urs erlone."

"Say on, Bruthern," returned the minister. "I hev no secrets now f'om Arizony hyur."

The two deacons exchanged glances, when Mr. McJenkin continued:

"Parson, you hev be'n our shupp'rd fur yurs 'nd yurs, 'nd we'uns air loth ter give ye up. The Church hev prayed over ye, 'nd waited on ye, hopin' ye mout see the error inter which ye hev be'n a-fallin'."

"What error, Bruthern? Come ter the pint, tho' I think I see w'at you air a-drivin' at."

"Yore bruthern demand that ye give up the companyunship of this woman hyur, ez a snare 'nd a temptation ter yore soul, 'nd a scan'nle ter the cause ye hev so long 'nd faithfully upheld."

The Parson felt Arizony's clasp upon his arm tighten;

it nerved him to yet greater plainness of speech, as he said solemnly:

"Shall not a man cleave ter his wife before all men —yea—though all men turn ergin him?"

"Shorely—yit——" stammered the deacon, but the minister interrupted him sternly:

"This woman is my wife—my beloved wife—tried by affliction, yet still pure and worthy. I would do much fur my dear bruthern of Choogaloo Church; bit, ef ye take not her unto your love and fellowship, ye take not me henceforth."

"She—your wife?" they exclaimed.

"We were married this day by Squire Gamble—'nd Bruthern—I speak it in love 'nd sadness—ef ye don't like it—make the best er wust on it, ez pleases ye. Come, Arizony."

The Parson and his wife turned and walked into the house, leaving the two deacons staring after them, feeling that, after all, the Church might have been too hasty. This—when the news was spread—soon grew to be the general opinion, and Choogaloo came round.

How could they do without their dear old pastor? After awhile—especially when the fruits of the two thousand dollars began to be seen about—they would have been shocked at the idea of doing without Arizony.

"She must hev be'n a fool onct," said Aunt Salome, "but she hev more'n made up fur hit sense."

This was the Parson's opinion, too, and I don't think he has ever had reason to change it.

This pathetic instance of man's infidelity is related by Charles Lever.

SOME ONE PAYS.

I HAVE been an idler and a wanderer for years. I left the army after a short experience of military life, imagining that I could not endure the restraints of discipline, and slowly discovered afterward that there is no such slavery as an untrammelled will, and that the most irksome bondage is nothing in comparison with the vacillations and uncertainties of a purposeless existence.

I was left early in life my own master, with no relatives except distant ones, and with means not exactly ample, but quite sufficient for the ordinary needs of a gentleman. I was free to go anywhere or do anything, which, in my case at least, meant to be everlastingly projecting or abandoning—now determining on some pursuit that should give me an object or a goal in life, and now assuring myself that all such determinations were slaveries, and that to conform to the usages by which men sought success in public or professional life was an ignoble drudgery and unworthy of him who could live without it.

In this unsettled frame of mind I travelled about the world for years—at first over the cognate parts of the continent, with which I became thoroughly familiar, knowing Rome, Paris, Vienna, and Naples, as I knew London. I then ran all over the States, crossing the Rocky Mountains and spending above a year on the Pacific Coast. I visited China and India. I came—I will not say home, for I have none—by Constantinople, and thence to Belgrade, where I made the acquaintance of a Turkish Pasha, then Governor of Scutari in Albania, and returned along with him to his seat of government. A Vice-Governor of Prevesa induced me to go back with him to that unpromising spot, assuring me that I should always find easy means of reaching Corfu

or Italy; and that, meanwhile, the quail-shooting, which was then beginning, would amply reward me for my stay.

Prevesa was about as wretched a village as poverty, sloth and Turkish indifference could make it. The inhabitants, who combined trade and fishing ostensibly, really lived by smuggling, and only needed the opportunity to be brigands on shore.

I was at least six days at Prevesa before I was aware that her Britannic Majesty had a representative there. It was in a chance ramble down a little alley which led to the bay I came upon the British arms over a low doorway. It was a very poor-looking, tumble-down house, with a very frail wooden balcony over the door, distinguished by a flagstaff, to be doubtless decorated on occasion by the proud flag of England.

Framing I forget what imaginary reason for inquiry, I entered and knocked at a door inscribed "Consular hours from ——," and then a smudge of paint obliterating the rest and leaving the import in doubt. Not receiving any answer to my summons, I pushed open the door and entered. A man in his shirt-sleeves and slippers was asleep on a very dirty sofa, and so soundly that my entrance did not disturb him. A desk with some much-worn books and scattered papers, a massive leaden inkstand and a large official seal were in front of him, but a paper of Turkish tobacco and a glass of what smelt to be gin were also present, and, from the flushed cheek and heavy breathing of the sleeper, appeared to have been among his latest occupations.

It is not necessary I should record our conversation. In his half-waking and not all sober state he had mistaken me for a British soldier who had been left behind somewhere, and was importuning to be sent on to England, but whose case evidently had inspired scant sympathy.

"I'll not do it," grumbled out the consul, with his eyes more than half closed. "You were drunk, or a deserter—I don't care which. My instructions are positive, and you may go to the d—— for me. There now, that's your answer, and you'd not get any other if you stayed there till dusk."

"I suspect you mistake me, sir," said I, mildly. "I am a traveller, and an English gentleman."

"I hate gentlemen, and I don't love travellers," said he, in the same drowsy voice as before.

"Sorry for that, but must ask you all the same if my passport permits me to go into Italy."

"Of course it does. What sort of traveller are you that does not know that much, and if you wanted a visa, it's the Italian should give it, and there's no Italian or Frenchman here. There's no one here but a Russian, Strantopsky—d—— his eyes—good morning"; and he again turned his face to the wall. I cannot say what curiosity prompted me to continue our little-promising conversation, but there was something so strange in the man's manner at moments—something that seemed to indicate a very different condition from the present—that I determined at all hazards to linger on.

"I don't suppose the sight of a countryman can be a very common event in these regions," said I, "and I might almost hope it was not an unpleasant one!"

"Who told you that, my good fellow?" said he, with more animation than before. "Who said that it gave me any particular pleasure to see one of those people that remind me of other times and very different habits?"

"At all events I, as an individual, cannot open these ungracious recollections, for I never saw you before—I do not even now know your name."

"The F. O. list has my whole biography. 'Thomas Gardner Lydyard, educated at All Souls, Oxford, where he took first class in classics and law; was appointed cornet in the Second Life Guards, 6th ——, 18—; sent with Lord Raycroft's mission to Denmark to invest his Christian Majesty with the insignia of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. Contested Marcheston ——, 18—, and was returned on a petition.' I'll finish what's not in the book—backed Queen Mab at seven to two—got a regular cropper—had to bolt and live three years in Sweden—took to corn brandy and strong cavendish, and ended as you see—V. C. at Prevesa. Is not that a brilliant ending for a youth of promise? Do

you remember in your experience as a man of travel that you can match it?"

By this time he had risen to a sitting posture, and, with his hair rudely pushed back by his hands, and his face grown red, looked as fierce and passionate as high excitement could make a man.

"I've heard your name very often," said I, calmly; "Close and St. John used to talk of you constantly, and I remember Moresby saying you were the best rider of a flat-race among the gentlemen of England."

"I was better, ten times better, across country. I could get more out of my horse than any of the so-called steeple-chase riders; and, as I was seldom punished, the betting men never knew when my horse was distressed. Close could have told you that. Did he ever tell you that I was the best cricketer at Lord's? What's that?" cried he suddenly, as a small door at the end of the room opened and closed again almost instantly. "Oh, it's dinner! I suppose if I had any shame I should say luncheon, for it's only two o'clock, not to say that the meal itself will have small pretensions to be called a dinner. Will you come and look at it?"

There was nothing very hearty in the invitation; as little was there any courtesy. But the strange contrast of the man's shabby exterior and the tone in which of a sudden he had burst out to speak, excited an intense curiosity in me to see more of him; and though I was not without some scruple as to my right to be there at all, I followed him as we walked into the inner room.

A young girl, whose pale, careworn face and gentle look struck me more than the elegance of feature which I afterward recognized, curtesied slightly as we entered.

"A distressed B. S., Marion," said the consul, introducing me; "my daughter, sir—I'm not aware of your name."

"Lowther."

"Lowther, then—Mr. Lowther, Miss Lydyard; that's the regular form, I believe. Sit down and let us have our soup"; and as he spoke, he proceeded to ladle out a smoky compound in which rice and fragments of lamb were freely mingled.

"This is all you will get for dinner, Mr. Lowther, and so secure what solids come to your share; and here is such wine as we drink here. It comes from Patras, and has its fine flavor of resin."

I ate and drank freely, and talked away about the place and the people, and at last induced my host to speak of himself and his own habits. He had fished and shot, he said, some years before, but he had given up both; he had also had an Arab nag or two, but he had sold them—in fact, as time wore on, he had abandoned everything like pastime or amusement, and now droned away life in a semi-stupor, or between gin and sleep.

"Capital fellows, these Albanian brutes, for letting a man have his way. No one asks how you live or with whom. The hogs in a sty are not less troubled with public opinion. Except once that the pasha sent me an offer for Marion, I don't know that I have ever had a state communication since I took up my post."

The young girl's face flushed crimson, but she never spoke, nor had I yet heard the sound of her voice.

"My Russian colleague," continued he, with a savage laugh, "grew half terrified at the thought of my influence here if my daughter became a sultana, and got some fellow to write a letter in a Paris newspaper to denounce the British intrigue, and declare that I had become a Mussulman; and the F. O. people wrote out to me to inquire if it were true, and I replied that, as I had not owned a hat for five-and-thirty years, I wore a turban when I went out, but as that was an event that didn't happen more than twice or thrice a year, they needn't mind it. I'd not go out any more.

"After that the official fellows, who seemed to have forgotten me before, never gave me any peace—asking for returns of this and reports of that. How many piastres the pasha gave his cook—how many kids went to a pilaff—how many wives to a small harem—what was the least a man could live on in the English service—and whether keeping men poor and on the prowl was not a sure measure to make them of an inquiring and inquisitive disposition.

"I take it, they must have liked my despatches, for

not a month passed that they did not poke me up. At last there came a young fellow this way; he was on a walk down to Thessaly, he said, to see Mount Olympus; he hurt his foot, and he stayed here several weeks, and he wrote them a despatch in my name, and said what a stunning fine thing it would be to make all this country and the Epirus Greek; and that we should checkmate the Russians by erecting a rival state and orthodox church, and I don't know what else. He got up his Greek theology from Marion, here—her mother was from Attica—and he made believe that he knew all the dogmas."

I stole a look at Marion, but as quickly withdrew it, for she was deadly pale, and looked as if about to faint.

"Marion knows," continued he, "all the fine reasons he gave for the policy, and how it was not to be confounded with what the Greeks call the *grande idée*—no Byzantian renaissance humbug at all, but some sort of protectorate state, with England, France, and Italy, I think, as the protecting powers; and, in fact, he got so plausible, and quoted such marvellous names that F. O. rose to the bait and asked to have further information; but by that time he had gone away, and we never saw more of him."

The young girl rocked to and fro in her chair, and fearing she would fall off in a faint, I half arose to catch her, when a look so imploringly sad as to go to my heart arrested me, and I sat still. To avert attention from her I asked the consul some questions as to the value of the project he had written about.

"I suppose it was about as wise as such things generally are," continued he; "it may have had its little grain of sense somewhere, and all its disadvantages required time to develop. He was a shrewd sort of a fellow, that William Hope—that was his name; he borrowed £20 of me, and he sent it back too, and a very pretty writing-desk to Marion, and a box of books; and he said he'd come back some fine day and see us, but he has apparently forgotten that, and it's now two years and a half we have never heard of him. Is it not, Marion?"

"Two years and eight months," said she, calmly; but her lips trembled, in spite of her.

I was not sorry when our chiboucks were introduced, and the young girl had a fair pretext to steal away; for I saw with what a struggle she was controlling her emotion, and what a relief it would be for her to escape notice.

When I wished him good-night, he was far too deep in the gin-flask to make his words impressive; but as he told me he'd like me to come up often and sit with him, I determined to accept his invitation so long as I lingered in the neighborhood.

II.

I stayed on five weeks at Prevesa, for though I gave my evenings to the consul, I passed every morning with Marion. I never saw a girl whose society had the same charm for me. Heaven knows there could scarcely have been so dreary a spot, nor one where life had fewer pleasures; but there seemed a capacity for enjoyment in her mind, which, whether from sun or sky or shore, from breezy mountain or dark, nestling wood, could extract its own delight and be happy.

I had seen enough even on the first day I met her to be aware that Hope had not made a merely passing impression upon her heart, and I was cautious to avoid all that might revive the memory of his name. This reserve on my part seemed actually at length too much for her patience, for in one of our long walks she suddenly asked me if I had never known him.

"No," replied I, "never; and I have been guardedly careful not to ask you about one of whose intimacy with you I feel jealous."

"How do you mean jealous?" asked she, turning on me those large full eyes that reminded me of the Homeric simile, the "ox-eyed."

"Perhaps my word was ill chosen," said I, in some confusion; "but what I tried to convey was the discomfiture I felt on thinking that there had been one who walked with you where we are walking, and whose

words, it might be, interested you as much, or more, than mine."

"Yes, it is true," said she, softly.

"What is true?" said I, in a low voice.

"That he loved me!" said she, in the same unaltered tone.

"And you——," but I caught myself at once, and, shocked at the ungenerous daring, turned it off by saying: "I should like to hear more of him; tell me what you know of his history or belongings."

"I know nothing, except that he was as poor as ourselves; that whatever he should become in life must be his own achievement; that he was friendless and alone."

"He was a gentleman?" said I, inquiringly.

"Was he not a gentleman! Was not every word, every opinion he uttered, the soul of honor and high feeling! When he spoke of what he had read, he knew how to praise all that was noble and truthful and worthy, and to decry whatever was ignoble and mean. When he helped a beggar on the road, he gave his alms like one whose happier fortune it was to aid a brother, and who might himself accept assistance to-morrow. And so, through all he did, the world seemed like some flowery meadow, where, if we would, we might stroll or stretch at ease, each happy with each."

"He loved you very much, Marion, and——"

"Why has he not returned?" said she, as her eyes flashed fiercely. "Say out your words, or if you have no courage for them, let me say them. It was this you would have asked."

"I had not any right."

"Of course you had not; but I will give the right, that I may shame the questioner. If he has not come back, will you be prepared to say that he may not come to-morrow? This very night? At first, in every footfall on the road, in every voice I heard—I have grown wiser now, and I can wait."

"Such trustfulness honors you," said I, thoughtfully.

"It is no more than I owe him. There, look there!" said she; "there is a Levanter coming in already, and but a moment back that sea was like a mirror! Is not

life just such another ocean, and can he who plans a voyage be more certain of his weather? How can I know what difficulties he is now combating, what barriers oppose him?"

"I should be glad to feel that some one would, one day, trust me in that fashion."

"So she will, if you inspire her with the same love. A woman's heart can be as good or as bad as you like to make it. She has but the keeping of it: the culture is another's."

This was the tone of many a conversation we had together, through all of which I could gather how a girl of a strong will and an untried nature had been gradually moulded to opinions new and strange to her by one whose temperament and character were stronger than her own.

That she loved him with her whole heart—that she felt toward him that almost worship with which a fervent imagination will inspire its object of devotion—was clear enough. But I own that my greater anxiety was to learn, if I could, who this man was, what he was, and how he came here? It was not difficult to believe that even a man of culture and refinement might have been in love with this girl. She was, with certain traits of delicate health and pallor, of great beauty; her large, lustrous eyes, more expressive from the dark color of the orbits round them, could change from a melting softness to a glance of wide defiance; and her mouth, of which the teeth inclined slightly inward, had a character of winning sweetness there was no resisting. Her figure might be called faultless; all I have ever seen of the statuesque in symmetry was realized in that lithe and graceful form, which, even under the coarse drapery she wore, betrayed in every pose and movement the perfection of form. And just as the conscious grace of the beautiful woman blended with the bounding elasticity of the happy girl, so in temperament she united all the thoughtful moods of a reflective mind with the fresh, wild impulses of the child.

"I know," said she to me one day, "I see it; you are puzzled about William Hope."

"I own it," said I, half sorrowfully.

"And you cannot imagine how this man of refinement—this creature of gifts and graces, this eminent gentleman, for I know your comprehensive phrases—could have loved such an one as me."

"Far from it, Marion; my wonder is how he could tear himself away from you, even for a season."

"That was duty."

"But what kind of duty? He had no ties—no cares of any calling; you say he had no relatives to dictate to him; how could he explain a necessity where there was no pressure?"

"What he said was enough for me. And," said she, after a pause, "it would have been a bolder than either you or I who would have dared to question him."

This chance speech explained in full the ascendency that his more powerful nature had gained over her, and how it was easier for her to believe than to distrust him.

"Does he write to you?"

"No."

"Nor you to him?"

"No; he did not ask it."

"And still you know he will come back?"

"I know it"; and she nodded twice, with a little smile that seemed to say how sure she felt in the avowal.

If there seems scant delicacy in the way I dared to question her, let me hasten to say that our intimacy warranted the freedom, which her manner besides invited; for I have not given here the details of those conversations that occurred between us, nor told how we were led on, from word to word, to closest confessions.

Anything more hopeless than the attempt to gain her affections I could not imagine; but the conviction, strong as it was, did not save me from falling desperately in love with her. In honest fact, the glimpse I had caught of her nature, when revealing to me her love for another, had completely enraptured me; her warm fidelity, her unswerving faith, and her sustaining pride in the man she loved, needed less loveliness than hers to make her a prize to be striven for.

The only question that then remained was, Should I

break the spell that was on me by incurring a distinct refusal; or should I fly at once and leave the place forever?

The latter seemed the wiser resolve, and I came to it as I slowly walked homeward to my inn at night. Instead of going to bed, I sent for the landlord, and engaged with him to furnish me horses and a guide to any point on the coast where I might take shipping for Italy or the shores of the Adriatic. There was a return caravan with a strong armed party bound for Salonica to start at midnight. I made my bargain, and within two hours afterward was on the road.

I have little more to add. We were nearly three weeks on the way, and I was thoroughly exhausted, weather-worn and very ragged, when I entered at nightfall that dirty seaport which I am now told is to become the greatest commercial mart of the Levant. One of the first sights that struck me as I came in was a party of yacht sailors with the word "Marmion" on their glazed hats.

The "Marmion" was the crack yacht of Cowes—the fastest cutter it was supposed ever built, and lately bought by the Duke of R——, whom I had known intimately at All Saints. Having learned that he was bound for the Piræus, I sent off a few lines, asking, if it were not inconvenient, that he would give me a passage to Greece.

A letter from the duke, with a most cordial invitation, answered me within an hour. He was on his wedding tour, and had a small party of friends, but ample room, and a hearty welcome for me.

If I were painting a picture *de genre*, I might linger to sketch some of the scenes and one or two of the characters of that yacht party; but though there was a very pretty and attractive bride, and more than one bridemaid of striking beauty, and some half-dozen very assiduous young men of great fascination and faultless costume, I was too much under the shadow of my late discomfiture to emerge into the broad sunlight of their gay converse.

"What is the matter with you?" said R—— to me one

night, as we walked the deck alone; "I never saw you before in such low spirits."

I made some pretext of health, and changed the theme, when he asked me where I had been, and how I had come to that little-visited spot, Salonica.

"As for that," I said, "I have been sojourning in scores of places not fit to compare with it; places you never so much as heard of—Yanina, Arta, Corstatacu, and Prevesa."

"Prevesa! the little bay opposite Corfu?"

"Yes; how do you know it?"

"Because I passed three months there. It was in that little, dreary fishing village, where I lived on sardines and boiled rice, I wrote a marvellous state paper that the fellows at F. O. used to say made it a crying shame for me to leave diplomacy. I was then attached to my uncle's embassy at Constantinople."

"What year was that?"

"In 18—. I seldom can recall a date, but I have a clew to this one." He paused for some seconds, and added: "There was a good-looking girl there that I 'spooned' and got very fond of, too. That's the confounded part of those barbarous places. It is not only the onion and the black bread you get used to, but you conform to the women, too; and, if you remain overlong, you end by marrying one of them. Shake your head, old fellow, but it might happen all the same." He paused for a moment or two, gave a faint sigh, and then, with a sort of shake, like throwing off a load, said: "Come down below, and let's have something to chirk us up a bit."

This clear-drawn picture of a French christening, with its sweet and touching sequel, is from the pen of Guy de Maupassant, and is made into English for ROMANCE by Mary W. Wilson.

THE BAPTISM.

BEFORE the gate of the farm the men waited in Sunday attire. The May sun poured its clear light upon the blossoming apple-trees, round like huge bouquets, white, pink, and perfumed, and which put a roof of flowers over the whole court-yard. Unceasingly they shed about themselves a snow of delicate petals, which whirled and turned in falling into the high grass, where the poppies gleamed red like drops of blood.

Suddenly, down below, behind the trees of the farm, the bell of the church resounded. Its voice of iron hurled into the joyous sky a feeble and distant call.

Swallows filed like arrows across the blue space, shut in by the tall and immovable beech-trees. The odor of the stable spread about, mingled with the sweet and pleasant breath of the apple-trees.

One of the men before the gate turned toward the house, and cried: "Come, come, Melina, the bell sounds."

He was perhaps thirty years old. He was a peasant of large frame, which the long labors of the fields had not yet bent nor deformed. An old man, his father, knotty like the trunk of an oak-tree, with misshapen wrists and twisted legs, declared: "Women are never ready in time." The two other sons of the old man began to laugh, and one, turning to his older brother, who had first called, said to him: "Go and fetch 'em, Polyte. They'll not come before noon." And the young man entered his house.

A flock of ducks, stopping near the peasants, began to quack, flapping their wings; then they went toward the marsh with their slow and balanced step.

Then in the open door a stout woman appeared, who

carried an infant of two months. The white strings of her tall cap hung down her back, falling over a red shawl, shining like a fire, and the little boy, wrapped in white linen, lay on her bosom. Next the mother came out in her turn, large and strong, though hardly eighteen years old. Fresh and smiling, she was holding the arm of her husband. The two grandmothers came behind, wrinkled like old apples, with evident fatigue in their limbs, bent by time and by patient and rude toil. One of them was a widow; she took the arm of the father standing before the gate, and they proceeded at the head of the company behind the child and the nurse. The rest of the family followed. The younger ones carried paper sacks full of sugar-plums. Below, the little bell sounded without ceasing, calling with all its force the expected child. The street-urchins mounted upon the wayside banks; men appeared at the fences; the maids of the farm remained standing, each between two pails full of milk which they placed on the ground, in order that they might look at the baptism.

The nurse triumphantly bore her living burden, and avoided the pools of water in the hollows of the road between the tree-covered slopes. The elders came with ceremony, walking a little unsteadily on account of their age and infirmities. The young men wanted to dance, and they looked at the maidens who came to see them pass. The father and mother walked slowly, more serious than the others following this child, who should take their place later in life, who should continue their name in the country—the name of Dentu, well known in the canton. They passed out into the plain and crossed the fields in order to avoid the long détour of the road.

Now one could see the church with its pointed belfry. There was an opening in it just below the slate roof; and something moved in there, coming and going with a swift rebound, passing and repassing behind the narrow window. It was the bell, which sounded always, crying to the new-born child to come for the first time to the house of the Good God.

The door of the church was open. The priest, a tall young man with auburn hair, strong and sinewy, a Dentu also, uncle of the little one, waited before the altar. According to the ceremony, he baptized his nephew Prosper Cæsar. The child began to cry when he tasted the symbolic salt. When the service was finished, the family waited at the entrance while the Abbé laid aside his surplice; then they began the return.

They walked fast now, for they were looking forward to dinner. All the little urchins of the country followed, and each time any one threw them a handful of bonbons there was a furious conflict, scufflings one with another and pulling of hair. A dog also threw himself into the mass to get the sugar-plums, pulled out by the tail, by the ears, or by the feet, but more obstinate than the youngsters themselves. The nurse, a little weary, said to the Abbé, who walked near her: "Tell me, Monsieur the Curé, would you mind holding your nephew a bit, to relieve me? I've a sort of cramp in the stomach."

The priest took the child, whose white dress made a shining spot upon his black cassock, and kissed it, embarrassed by this light burden, not knowing how to hold it. Everybody began to laugh. One of the grandmothers called out from a distance: "Come, tell me, Abbé, doesn't it make you sad that you will never have a child like that yourself?"

The priest made no reply. He walked with long strides, looking fixedly into the blue eyes of the baby and longing to kiss him upon his chubby cheeks. At last he could no longer refrain, and lifting the child to his face, he kissed him. The father cried out: "Come then, Curé, if you want one, you have but to say so." And they began to chaff, as country folk do.

When they were seated at table, the heavy gayety burst forth like a tempest. The two other sons were soon to marry also; their affianced brides were there, having come for the dinner only. There were loud, coarse words, which made the girls blush. The men beat upon the table with the fist and shouted.

The father and grandfather were unfailing in their jests. The mother smiled; all the old people took part in the mirth and uttered their pleasantries. The Curé, accustomed to these riotous peasants, remained quietly seated by the side of the nurse, tickling with his finger the mouth of his nephew, to make him laugh. He seemed surprised at the sight of this child, as if he had never seen one before.

He considered him with careful attention, with thoughtful gravity, with a tenderness awakened in the depths of his heart—a tenderness heretofore unknown, strange, acute, and a little sad—toward this tiny, fragile being who was his brother's son.

He heard nothing; he saw nothing; he looked only at the child. He wanted to take him again upon his knees, for he kept upon his breast and in his heart the sweet sensation of having carried him, when returning from the church. He was strangely affected before this embryonic man, as before an ineffable mystery of which he had never thought, an august and sainted mystery, the incarnation of a new soul, the grand enigma of a life at its beginning; of love at its awakening; of the race, which goes on and on forever; of humanity, which continually advances.

The nurse was eating, her face red, her eyes troubled. She was worried by the little one who was restless at table.

The Abbé said to her, "Give him to me. I am not hungry." And he took the child.

Then all around him disappeared,—everything vanished; he kept his eyes fixed upon this fat, rosy face. Little by little, the heat of the tiny body reached his limbs through the child's clothes and through the cloth of his cassock, and it penetrated him like a caress, very light, very good, very chaste, a delicious caress which brought tears to his eyes.

The noise of the feasters became terrifying. The child, excited by the clamor, began to cry. A voice cried out some coarse gibe, and an explosion of laughter shook the room. The mother rose; she took her child, and carried him into the adjoining room. She

returned after some minutes, declaring that he was sleeping gently in his cradle. The feast continued. Night was falling when they began the coffee.

A long time before this, the priest had disappeared, though no one had observed his absence. The young mother finally arose to go and see if the little one still slept. It was dark now. She entered the chamber, groping; she advanced with arms extended, in order not to run against the furniture. But a strange sound made her stop short, and she hurried out frightened, certain that she had heard some one move. She came back to the dining-room, very pale and trembling, and told her story. All the men rose in tumult, drunk and threatening; the father, with lamp in hand, rushed in.

The Abbé, kneeling beside the cradle, was sobbing, his forehead upon the pillow where lay the head of the child.

In the following old-fashioned and anonymous story of an old-fashioned time, the ghost, which was the favorite character in the fiction of those days, is made to serve a useful purpose. Whether the spirited maidens of these later days would care to secure the return of a faithless lover by such means, is uncertain.

A SISTERLY GHOST.

More than a hundred years ago, a little settlement was formed upon the banks of the Connecticut, strangely enough, of Dutchmen and of Yankees. At the time this story opens, the original feuds between the settlers had died out, and they were living upon their broad meadows in neighborly peace. Jacob, or, as he was commonly called, Yok, Suydam, was one of these early Dutch planters, and Jedidiah Williams, his neighbor, was one of the first Yankees who sat down on the banks of the river. Williams was a man of a hard countenance and severe manners, who had been a deacon of the church in the parish he had left, and who did not, as I have known some people do, forget his religion when it ceased to be of any service to him in his worldly concerns. He was as grave in his demeanor, as guarded in his speech, and as constant in his devotions, as ever, notwithstanding that these qualities in his character were less prized in his new situation than they had been in Connecticut. The place had as yet no minister; but Williams contrived to collect every Sunday a few of the neighbors at his house to perform the weekly worship. On a still summer morning, you might hear him doling out a portion of the Scriptures, or reading a sermon of some godly divine of the day, in a sort of nasal recitation, which could be distinguished swelling over the noises of his pigs and poultry, at the distance of a quarter of a mile from his dwelling. Honest Yok read his Bible, too, but he read it in Dutch, and excused himself from attending the meetings at Williams's house, on account of his ignorance of the language in

which the exercises were held. Instead, however, of confining himself to the house during the whole Sunday, like Williams, he would sometimes stray out into his fields, to look at his cattle and his crops, and was known once or twice to lie down on the grass under a tree, in the corner of one of his inclosures, where the rustling of his Indian corn, and the hum of the bees among the pumpkin-blossoms, would put him to sleep. The rest of the day, when the weather was fine, he passed in smoking his pipe under a rude kind of piazza in front of his house, looking out over the rich meadows or listening to a chapter of the New Testament read to him by one of his daughters. He was also less guarded in his language than suited the precise notions of Williams; the words "duyvel," or "donner," or some such unnecessary exclamation, would often slip out of his mouth in the haste of conversation. And there was another practice of Yok's, which was still less to the taste of his neighbor. As was the case with most of the Dutch planters at that time, his house swarmed with negro domestics, and among the merry, sleek-faced blacks, that jabbered Dutch and ate sauerkraut in his kitchen, there was one who could play tolerably on the fiddle. Yok did not suffer this talent to lie useless. On every New Year's eve, and not on that alone, but on many a long and bright winter evening that followed it, when the snow looked whiter than ever in the moonlight, and you could see the little wedges of frost floating and glistening in the air, the immense fireplace in the long kitchen was piled with dry hickory, the negro Orpheus was mounted on a high bench, and the brawny youths and ruddy girls of the place danced to the music till the cocks crew. Yok's own daughters, the prettiest maidens that ever ran in the woods of a new settlement, were allowed to acquit themselves exceedingly well on these occasions; but the performances of Yok himself extorted universal admiration. Old as he was, and he did not lack many winters of sixty, whenever he came on the floor, which was generally just before the breaking-up of the revel, the youngest and most active of his guests acknowledged themselves outdone.

He executed the double shuffle with incredible dexterity, drummed with his heels on the floor till you would have thought the drumming an accompaniment to the fiddle, and threw the joints of his limbs into the most gracefully acute angles that can be imagined.

Jedidiah, of course, did not suffer these irregularities of his neighbor to pass unrebuked, and Yok always took his admonitions kindly enough, although without much disposition to profit by them. He invariably apologized by saying that he was a Dutchman, that he followed the customs of his countrymen, and the practices of his fathers before him; and that it did not become the like of him to presume to be wiser or better than his ancestors, who were honest men, and who, he believed, had gone to heaven. The appearance of respect, however, with which he received these reproofs, went far to reconcile Jedidiah to his practical neglect of them, and a kind of friendship at length grew up between the two settlers and their families. Yok's pretty daughters came constantly to attend Williams's meetings, and Williams's son was a frequent and welcome visitor at the house of the hearty and hospitable Dutchman.

Yok's family, with the exception of the negro domestics I have mentioned, consisted only of himself and his two daughters. Mary, the elder, was somewhat tall, with a delicate shape, and a peaceful, innocent look. The climate, and three generations of American descent, had completely done away in her personal appearance all traces of her Dutch extraction, except the fair hair and the light blue eye. She was a sincere, single-hearted creature, whom the experience of eighteen years had not taught that there was such a thing as treachery in the world. It was no difficult matter to move her either to smiles or to tears, and had she lived in this novel-reading age, she would have been inevitably spoiled. As it was, the poor girl had no books but the Bible, of which there were in Yok's family several copies in the old Dutch letter, and she was forced to content herself with weeping over the fortunes of Ruth and the resurrection of Lazarus.

Geshie, her sister, little more than a year younger, had an appearance of firmer and more sanguine health than Mary, and all that excess of animal spirits and love of mirth, with which youth and high health are generally accompanied. She was ruddier, shorter in stature, and fuller in her proportions than the elder sister, and under the shade of her thick brown hair, her bright eye shone out with a look so arch and full of mischief, that, like the sun in June, it was not a thing to look long upon. The two sisters, though so little alike, were both as kind and good as the day is long, and were acknowledged to be the handsomest girls in the settlement. People, however, were divided in opinion as to which was the handsomer and more agreeable of the two. The greater number gave the preference to the blooming and sprightly Geshie, but James Williams, the son of Jedidiah, thought differently.

Young Williams, who had come with his father to the new settlement, was a frank, high-spirited, giddy young fellow. He had given some proofs of forwardness in early youth, and his father had set his heart upon seeing him one of the burning and shining lights of the church, emulating in the pulpit the eloquence of Solomon Stoddard, and the sound doctrine of Jonathan Edwards. He had sent him to Yale college to furnish his mind with the necessary worldly learning, trusting to his own prayers and to Providence for the piety that was to fit him for the work of the ministry. But his expectations were wretchedly disappointed, for the young man proved refractory under the discipline of a college, and made so good a use of his opportunities of rebellion that in less than a year he was expelled. He came home to read Horace and shoot squirrels, and bear a part in the psalms sung at the meetings for religious worship held at his father's. He could not make up his mind to go back to the labors of husbandry, and yet was uncertain to what other course of life to betake himself.

Young men, who have nothing else to do, are apt to amuse themselves with making love. Time hung heavy on the hands of James Williams in the new and

thinly-inhabited settlement. He wandered through the old woods, that stretched away on all sides, till he was weary; he found them altogether too gloomy and too silent for his taste, and when their echoes were awakened by the report of his own fowling-piece, by the cawing of the crow, or the shriek of the hawk, he could not help thinking that these sounds would interest him more, if they conveyed a human meaning. He grew tired of reading Horace in a place where nobody cared for his Latin. At length he would shut his book, and lay his gun on the two wooden hooks in his father's kitchen, and walk down to the house of honest Yok Suydam, where the good Dutchman greeted him with a cordial grasp of the hand, and his daughters with smiles. James was soon master of Dutch enough to tell the story of his college pranks, which usually called a hearty laugh from the old gentleman, a sentence or two of kind expostulation from the elder daughter, and a torrent of good-humored raillery from the younger. In return for the proficiency which the society of the family enabled him to make in their language, James offered to teach the young ladies English, and the elder readily undertook to be his pupil. As for Geshie, she had no ambition that way; it was, she said, a silken, glozing tongue—the tongue of pedlers and sharpers, fit only for those who wished to defraud and deceive; she was contented, for her part, with the plain household speech in which she had been brought up—the language of honesty and sincerity. James began to read the New Testament along with Mary, it being the only book with which she was familiar. After getting through with a few chapters, it was exchanged for a volume of Richardson's "Pamela," which had then just made its appearance. James had contrived to possess himself of a copy of this work while at New Haven, and concealed it as carefully from the eyes of his father as the quail hides her nest from the schoolboy. He knew that, if it should be discovered, the consequences could be no less than the great wrath of his father toward so graceless a son, and that the offending book would be burnt with fire.

Geshie soon had occasion to pay her sister a multitude of sly compliments on her proficiency in English. She had never known, she said, a tutor so assiduous, nor a pupil so teachable. It was not, indeed, extraordinary that James should fancy himself in love with the prettiest girl in the settlement, nor was it more so that she should be seriously in love with him. The young couple soon understood each other, and Geshie also, although not the confidante of her sister, understood enough of the matter to anticipate a merry wedding and gay wedding-dresses. The language of Holland has been called barbarous and harsh; in the mouth of Mary, James thought it infinitely more musical than the Latin, and the whispers of affection in her imperfect English seemed to give new graces to his native tongue. Their studies, however, were often interrupted by the frolics of Geshie. Sometimes the volume of "Pamela" was missing for several days, and James was obliged to defer his lessons till it could be found; sometimes the master and scholar, on attempting to rise, found themselves fastened to their chairs, and their chairs fastened together. James was somewhat of a superstitious turn; he had read Mather's "Magnalia," a copy of which by some accident belonged to his father, and had imbibed a deep respect for spirits and goblins. Geshie was not slow in discovering this weakness in his character, nor in making it contribute to her amusement. She had an abundance of stories of superr atural terrors, and always took care to relate them to James in the evening. On a moonlit night she would tell him of an apparition seen by moonlight, and on a cloudy evening, of a ghost that walked when you could not see your hand. She would then enjoy his evident alarm, as it grew late, and as he looked alternately at his hat and the window. In the mean time, Geshie, notwithstanding her pretended contempt for the English tongue, was making a progress in learning equal at least to that of her sister. In truth, she was sufficiently indifferent as long as Mary was occupied with the English Testament; but when the first volume of "Pamela" was brought to the house,

her curiosity to know its contents prevailed over every other consideration. After that she lost nothing of the lessons James gave her sister; she treasured up in her memory every English phrase she heard uttered; she read "Pamela" by stealth; and her talent for mimicry soon gave her a tolerable command of the English accent.

A year had now passed since James and Mary had become acquainted with each other. The settlement was growing every day more populous, and James had no difficulty in finding companions to cheat him of the tedious hours. There were also among the daughters of the new-comers some who might be thought nearly as handsome and agreeable as Mary herself. His affection for her, by a perversity not uncommon in young men who are loved better than they deserve, began gradually to cool; his visits to her father's house became less and less frequent; the poor girl's English studies were woefully neglected, and finally discontinued altogether. Once she ventured to speak to him of his altered behavior; but he gave her an indirect and trifling answer, and, after that, she spoke of it no more. But she felt it not the less deeply; her heart bled in silence and in secret; she became melancholy; was often found weeping by herself, and seemed going into a deep decline. The good old Suydam, who suspected nothing of the true cause of his daughter's malady, after prescribing all the household remedies he could think of, called in the doctor, notwithstanding she protested vehemently against it. The doctor came with his saddlebags on his arm,—a smock-faced young man just settled in the place, who thought himself happy if his prescriptions did not aggravate the disorder. He examined the patient, seemed to hesitate about her complaint, but, as he had been called, he knew his duty too well not to prescribe; he therefore ordered a little valerian, and took his leave. Geshie, who understood her sister's disorder better than the physician, and knew that it was not to be healed by medicine, threw the drug out of the window as soon as he was gone, and saved her the disgust of swallowing it.

This kind-hearted girl now undertook herself to be her sister's physician. She sang to her all the old songs she remembered, both sad and merry, composed by the mellifluous poets of Holland long ago, and handed down in the American settlements from mother to daughter, for a hundred years at least. She drew her forth to ramble in the meadows, and to pierce the great forest around them in various directions along dark and cool paths, leading to the sunny cultivated openings lately made in its bosom. She collected for her entertainment all the gossip of her neighborhood, mimicked the accent of the Yankees, danced, capered, and played a thousand monkey-tricks to divert her. All her efforts were ineffectual to restore health and spirits to her sister, and she saw, with a sorrow almost increased to despair, that this was only to be hoped for from the return of her lover's affections.

It was now October. The forests around this valley, where there was then little else but forest, had put on their colors of yellow, orange, and crimson; and looked yet brighter in the golden sunshine of the season that lay upon them. The ripe apples were dropping from the young apple-trees by the cottages of the settlers; the chestnut, the oak, and the butternut were beginning to cast their fruit; squirrels were chirping and barking on the branches of the walnut; rabbits were scudding over the bright leaves that lay scattered below; and the heavy whirr of the partridge, as he rose from the ground, told how well he had been pampered by the abundance of the season. James Williams could not resist the temptation of such fine weather, and so much game. He was absent whole days in the depths of the woods: in the morning you might hear the report of his fowling-piece in the edge of the forest, in the neighborhood of his father's; at noon its echoes would be sent faintly from the cliffs of that long rocky ridge which bounds the valley to the east. One morning James passed by the house of Mary's father with his fowling-piece. He did not dare to raise his head as he went, nor to cast a look at the windows of the house, lest he should see the face of her with whose affections

he had so unfeelingly trifled. He pretended to be very busy about the lock of his gun, until he had fairly passed the dwelling, when he quickened his pace, and was soon out of sight. Geshie observed him as he went, and determined to watch his return.

He did not return until after sunset. It was a clear night, except for some scattered banks of mist from the river; the moon was shining brightly, and Geshie discerned at some distance the well-known gait of James, and the glitter of his fowling-piece. She saw that this was the moment for the execution of a plan, which she had formed in the hope that it might be of some advantage to her sister, but which she had communicated to no one. A few minutes afterward, a figure in white was seen stealing down from the house between some high banks so as not to be observed by James, toward a certain swamp.

It was necessary for James, after passing Suydam's house, to follow the road for some distance along the edge of this swamp. The spot had already begun to have a bad name; the body of an Indian infant had been found in some bushes by the edge, and a drunken German carpenter, who had straggled into the settlement, had lost the road, and perished there in a flood, which covered the meadows, the swamp, and the road itself, with the waters of the river. Among the tales of ghosts and hobgoblins, with which Geshie had formerly entertained James, were one or two stories of strange sights seen about this swamp, to which, I suspect, she maliciously added some embellishments of her own.

James's heart did not beat with its usual calmness as he approached the swamp. But his timidity rose to fear, and his fear to agony, and his whole frame shook, and a cold sweat broke out at every pore, as he saw a figure in white come out from the bushes, and move slowly toward him. He stood rooted to the ground without the power to fly, but his hands instinctively fumbled with his fowling-piece, as though he would have used it against the object of his fears. The spectre raised its arm with a menacing gesture, and the

piece fell from his hands to the ground. As the apparition drew nigh, he could perceive that it was wrapped in a linen sheet, and the white feet that showed themselves under the lower edge left him no doubt but that it was the tenant of a coffin who stood before him. He essayed to speak, but his throat seemed filled with ashes; nor was it necessary, for the arm of the spectre was again raised; he saw its eye glistening under the folds of the shroud; he saw its lips move; the words came forth in clear and solemn accents; he swooned, and fell to the ground.

The same evening, as Yok was quietly smoking his pipe by the fireside, and watching the changes in the embers, Geshie entered the room quite out of breath, with an expression of unusual agitation and anxiety on her countenance. She seated herself, and, after a moment's silence, "I have been thinking," said she, "that you are not a very good friend to Williams."

"Why so, my daughter?"

"It is so long since you have been to see him. I hope he has taken no offence at it; but, you know, he has not called at our house lately, and James, whom you used to be so fond of, and who diverted us so much, has not darkened our doors for many a long day."

"That is true, girl; I will see Williams to-morrow evening."

"Why not to-night? it is a beautiful night; the sky is so clear, and the moon so bright; it may be bad weather, to-morrow, you know; besides, Williams has really taken offence at your neglect of him; the sooner it is made up between you, the better."

"Why, that is true again: and I will even go to-night"; and Geshie, with a pleasure she could hardly conceal, reached him his hat, and heard him walk away in the direction of Williams's house with a pace quickened by the dampness of the evening air. On the way, Yok found James lying in the road apparently lifeless, and a man who was passing about the same time assisted in bearing him to his father's house, where, by proper applications, he was soon brought to himself. On his return Yok related these circumstances to

Geshie, who appeared as much surprised and interested as if she had known nothing of the matter.

To the numerous questions put to him respecting the condition in which he was found, James returned no direct answer, but desired to be left to repose. Sleep did not visit his eyes that night; the event of the evening, which he had remembered but faintly on first coming out of the swoon, returned to him in all its circumstances with an impression that grew stronger every moment. Again they seemed present to him; the haunted spot, the spectre, the shroud, the white feet and hands, the gleam of its eye, the perceptible motion of its lips, and the piercing and solemn tones of its voice. Then, also, the fearful words it uttered returned, one by one, to his recollection, and, as they returned, engraved themselves there, as the diamond ploughs its characters on the rock; again he heard himself denounced as treacherous, faithless, and cruel, and warned to escape an untimely end, by a speedy repentance. The morning found him haggard and exhausted, in a state of melancholy bordering on despair.

It happened at this time that the minister of the parish in which Williams had formerly lived was on a visit to his old neighbor. Williams, who had been one of the pillars of his church, had implored him so pathetically to come and dispense the word for a season in that destitute place, that he could not find it in his heart to deny him. He was one of that race of excellent old clergymen of which some specimens yet remain, I am told, in New England, renowned equally for good sermons in the pulpit, and good stories out of it. His round and somewhat florid face was set off by a short fox-colored wig, and the severity of his brow was tempered by the jollity of his cheeks and chin. The clergy, you know, were in those times the nobility of the country; their opinions were oracles, and their advice law. Those were good days, when the farmer sent the best of everything he had to the minister; when every hat was doffed as he passed, and when, in every house he entered, the great easy-chair was instantly wheeled for him to the front of the fireplace,

the housewife ran to comb her children, and the husband to broach the best barrel of cider in his cellar. Williams's minister was not a man to abuse the reverence in which he was held; the penitent are always ready to apply to a clergyman, but this good man was also the friend of the unfortunate and the unhappy.

In the morning, as soon as the clergyman was up, James sent for him, and communicated to him the adventure of the night. A long conversation ensued. The clergyman examined James with great minuteness concerning all the circumstances, and satisfied himself of the truth of his story. He then inquired of him if there were any particulars of his late way of life, which might have given occasion for so remarkable a visitation. James hesitated for a while, and at last confessed that he had loved Mary; that he believed he had won her affections; that they had talked of marriage; that he had discontinued his visits; and that he had been told she was unhappy. Another series of questions ensued, and at the end of the conference it was settled that James should immediately renew his engagement to Mary, and that the incident of the ghost should, in the mean time, be kept secret between him and the minister.

Mary did not know to what event she owed the return of her lover, for her sister had told nobody of the part she took in the affair. She received him without a word of reproach, but with a countenance in which tears and smiles contended for the mastery. She spoke with sorrow and concern of his altered and haggard appearance, and James wondered how he could ever have ceased to love her. The parents were consulted concerning the match. Yok was pleased because he had always liked James; and Williams, because Yok was the owner of broad woodlands and goodly meadows. An early day was fixed for the marriage. The good parson came all the way from Connecticut to assist at the nuptials, and the doctor, to whose sagacious prescription Yok attributed the rapid amendment that was taking place in his daughter's health, was also of the party. After the ceremony was over, and the minister

had retired, the company adjourned to the long kitchen. A great hickory fire was blazing in the chimney, and the negro fiddler, who had been provided for the occasion, with an associate, was mounted on his bench with the instrument of music at his shoulder. The couples were soon arranged; the bride and bridegroom, in the gayest attire of the day, were at the head; and old Yok himself was on the floor. A November wind was howling in the woods, the old trees creaked and groaned, and showers of the red leaves were driven against the windows; but the bluster without was unheard amid the merriment within. The black fiddlers threw themselves into the most violent contortions, and drew their bows from the head to the heel at every note. The sound of the instruments, the clatter of feet, the shouts of laughter, the jests that flew rapidly about, taken up by the shrill voices of the maidens, and echoed from the sonorous lungs of the rustic beaux, made the passer-by to stop in amazement.

James did not like the neighborhood of the place where he had seen the spectre; and soon after his marriage, he went to settle in one of the villages on the banks of the Hudson, where he long lived quietly and respectably. Geshie was my grandmother by the mother's side, and from her lips I had the tale I have related. As for the doctor who had prescribed for Mary, he rose almost immediately into great reputation and extensive practice.

This interesting New Year tale is written for ROMANCE by Matilda Astor Woodcock, who vouches for the main part of it as being strictly true.

THE MASKED ROBBER.

A STORY OF NEW YEAR EVE.

NEW YEAR EVE had again come, and, as usual, a large party of us young people were invited to see the old year out at my uncle's country seat. Right jolly were the last hours of the old year made under that hospitable roof, and the large rooms rang with merry laughter when one of the party was unwittingly caught "beneath the mistletoe bough."

Having wearied of dancing and games, we gathered in the large, old-fashioned hall—another of our time-honored customs—and then, in front of the great open fireplace, piled high with blazing hickory logs, we passed the last hours of the old year in story-telling. One of the most remarkable of these stories was told by my aunt, and I shall endeavor to repeat it as nearly as possible in her own words:

There is always one story which comes to me on New Year Eve and seems peculiarly appropriate to that time, although it is not a joyful one.

When I was sixteen, my mother died, and soon after her death my father sold our old home, and removed to a large farm. I had been born in the city, and until that time had always lived there. I keenly felt the change from the gay metropolis to the solitude of the country, but fortunately I was fond of reading and was also a great lover of Nature, so that in a measure I was compensated for the life which I had left. I saw little of the outside world; therefore the most trivial things became of interest to me.

One afternoon in June, when we had been living on the farm two years, I was sitting on the porch reading a novel and crying over the sad fate of the heroine,

when suddenly my attention was attracted by the sound of wheels. I looked up quickly from my book, and saw a buggy rapidly approaching our house. My curiosity was at once aroused, and my disappointment and surprise were great when I found that, instead of a stranger driving behind the thoroughbred little mare, Lake, one of our rough farm-hands, held the reins. Presently he drew up beside the porch, and his errand was made known in a few words. There had been a runaway about a mile from us, and the gentleman who was driving had been thrown from his carriage and seriously injured. Lake saw the man fall and went immediately to his rescue. He managed to get him to a barn near by and, after capturing the horse and buggy, both of which were unharmed, had driven over to see what should be done. It would be several hours before a doctor could be brought to him, and he was suffering so much pain that Lake did not like to leave him so long alone.

Just then my father came up, and, having heard Lake's story, said that the man should be brought at once to our house, and ordered one of the men to harness two of the horses to the farm-wagon. A mattress was then laid on it, and off they started, leaving me at home to put things in readiness for the injured man.

Our pretty spare room, with its fresh matting and Swiss curtains, was the one which I selected for him. It was on the ground-floor, and would therefore be more convenient than any other. Our guest, who gave his name as John Graham, soon arrived and was carried carefully to his chamber, and before very long the doctor came. Having set the broken limbs,—for one of his legs and one of his arms were broken,—and applied some cooling wash to the bruises, he left the patient to our care.

It was many weeks before he was able to move from his bed, but between the doctor's skill and our careful nursing he slowly regained his strength. Remember, my dears, in those days your white-headed old aunt was young and romantic, and a man far less fascinating and handsome than John Graham under such circum-

stances might have turned my silly head. I confess to you that my head was wholly turned, my heart entirely given away to this stranger. For weeks I was hands and feet to him. Never a wish was uttered by him that, were it in my power, I did not gratify. He was very fond of roses, and early every morning I would gather the choicest from our garden for John's room. I was perfectly delighted when he one day told me that my "cheeks put the roses to shame." It was the first compliment he had ever paid me, and for days the thought of it made me absurdly happy.

At last I felt that John loved me. I never moved that his eyes did not follow every motion, and how the light came into his eyes when I returned to him after some short absence! This was my first love, and by it my dull monotonous life seemed changed into a Paradise.

The weeks glided by. John had recovered and would soon leave us, yet still he had not spoken of his love; but after a while the words came. We were sitting on the porch in the moonlight, in the same place from which I had seen him carried in on that eventful day when he was hurt. My father's consent to our engagement was soon gained, as John's past life, so far as he could discover, was irreproachable, and his worldly prospects were good. Everything went on happily for the first few months, and it seemed that in our case love was to run a smooth course. I must not forget to tell you about my engagement ring. It was one which had been handed down through several generations to John. He had always worn it on his little finger. It was a serpent of silver, its head being formed of an enormous ruby and the tail of small diamonds. Inside the ring was written, "Time reveals all things." On the day of our engagement John took it from his finger and placed it on mine with these words: "Should aught part us, love, though years roll between, the sight of this ring will bring me to protect you."

At last my cup of happiness was full, but it was destined to be emptied to the dregs. I need not go over those months of misery, when John Graham came to

see me with his brain stupefied by liquor, and tell how I tried to bring him back, and how he would try and fail again.

At last, it came to my father's knowledge, and in one of his fits of fury at the weakness and loathsomeness of my lover, he literally kicked John out of the house. It is enough for me to say that things went from bad to worse. I could love John no longer, after he had sunk so low, and at last—it was on a New Year Eve, like this—our engagement was broken. I returned the ring, but John sent it back to me, praying me to keep it, "as a symbol of a love that had once been true."

After this, my health gradually gave way, and our physician advised my father to take me to Europe, which he did. We travelled several years and everything was done to divert and amuse me. At first, I prayed to die, but I was young, very young, and as the time passed by, life again became sweet to me. Another love came to me, far sweeter and stronger than that old, wild passion of my girlhood, and in your uncle, my dears, I found the perfect love of womanhood.

I had been married a number of years and was the mother of three children when your uncle was obliged to go to California, to look after some mines in which he had a large interest. As he expected to be there for a considerable time, we all went with him, and decided to rent a furnished house in the suburbs of L——. The one we fancied most was large, and only one story high. It was handsomely furnished and had a great many acres of ground around it. At first, I objected to taking it on account of the lonely location, but the numerous attractions which it possessed soon overcame this one fault, and before long we were comfortably settled in our new quarters. We had been living there only a year, when one evening,—this also was on New Year Eve—your uncle came home as usual, and after he had been in the house a few minutes, he received a dispatch which necessitated his starting off immediately, to be gone for two or three days. It was the first time

since our marriage that we had been separated, and that night I did feel a little nervous. I went to the nursery and looked at my children, sleeping peacefully, and then, taking a book, I read until I was so weary that I went to bed.

My bedroom was large and had four windows. Two of them opened on the piazza, and two on a beautiful green terrace. My dressing-table stood between the piazza-windows, and on it was my jewel-casket, containing all my diamonds, and several other valuable articles of jewelry. Usually, I kept this locked in an iron safe, but that evening I had taken it out, in order to get a pin for my husband to have mended in L——, and I had forgotten to put it back. After I was safely in bed, I remembered my casket, but concluded that no harm could possibly come to it in just that one night, and thought I would put it away in the morning. I do not know how long I had been asleep, when I was awakened by hearing a slight noise. Opening my eyes, I saw by the light of a dark-lantern the figure of a tall man standing by my dressing-table. My first impulse was to scream, and then came the thought, "If I do that, he will kill me!" Suddenly the man turned, and I could see that he was masked. Then I shut my eyes and feigned sleep. Stealthily he walked to the bed where I was lying, and, bending over, looked at me, for what seemed in my agony to be hours.

"O, God!" I thought, "if he will only kill me now!" But no!—he moved softly from my bed, and again walked to the dressing-table. I could hear him take my jewels, one by one, from the casket, and lay them gently down. At last, the box was emptied, and yet he did not move, but stood as if bound by a spell. I felt rather than heard that he was once more coming toward me. Certainly this time he would take my life, and I prayed God it might be done quickly; but, no! I must suffer still more. He knelt down and put his face so close to mine that I could feel his hot breath. I was like one petrified. My blood seemed frozen in my veins, and had the cold steel been pressed to my throat, I should not have felt a single pang. My whole

being seemed held by some terrible power. At last, he arose from his knees and, going to one of the windows, blew a whistle three times. This is all that I remember. My consciousness must have forsaken me.

When I again opened my eyes, the bright light was streaming through the blinds. At first, I had only a vague remembrance of what seemed to me a dreadful nightmare, but gradually the whole scene of the night before came clearly to my mind and a terror seized me. My children were my first thought. I sprang quickly from my bed, but fell heavily to the floor in a dead faint. The strain had proved too much for me. For days I lay unconscious, only feeling a burning pain in my head; but through God's mercy I was given back to my husband and children,—for not a hair of my little bairns' dear heads had been touched on that horrible night.

The subject of the masked robber was never mentioned until my health was fully restored. One day I was in my boudoir, idly lounging, when my husband came in and, seating himself on the sofa by my side, took a small piece of paper from his pocket-book. It looked like the fly-leaf of a book, and was covered with writing in lead pencil. He handed it to me, saying, "I think, little woman, you are strong enough to read this."

It was as follows:

"I have come here to-night with a band of robbers intending to steal and, if necessary, to murder. While taking the jewels from your casket, I came across a ring. That ring saved you. I looked upon your face and a flood of recollections came over me. You need never fear. I love you still. Bad as I am, the thought of your pure soul has never left me, and although I am a robber, the memory of you has kept my hands clean from blood. I shall always keep watch over you,—shall always protect you. J. G."

So the mystery was solved, and the robber, who had robbed me of nothing, was my old lover. Your uncle tried to search him out but in vain, and it was not until many years after that, having been invited to spend a

few days with some relatives of my husband's, in the western part of New York State, I again heard of John Graham.

One morning, at my cousin's suggestion, we walked over to the picturesque old church-yard. We strolled in and out among the graves; stopping now and then to read the quaint inscriptions. A simple gray stone, on which was hanging a small wreath of immortelles, attracted my notice. I stopped to see what might be written on it, and then I read the name "John Graham. Died on the Eve of New Year Day, 18—. Beloved of the people. God rest his soul." I asked my cousin if she knew who this John Graham was? And she told me that some twenty years before a man with a peddler's pack had come into the town. His wares were good, and he sold a great many. As he travelled from house to house, staying, as was the custom in those times, first with one family, then with another, he became very popular, and was induced to take his small capital and open a store. He gave his name as John Gray, and he was so self-denying, and did so many deeds of charity, that the country folk almost canonized him as a saint. Their shrewd minds soon discovered in him no common peddler, and when at his death an old envelope was found next his heart, with the name John Graham in a woman's hand, and, inside, a lock of yellow hair, carefully folded in paper, on the outside of which was written, "My guiding star," the curiosity of the good people was at its height. Your uncle and I could have solved the problem, but we carefully guarded the secret, and to this day the village gossips wonder who "John Graham" could have been. I have never known how he happened to fall into such a state of degradation as to become a robber, but I firmly believe that by his after life he made full atonement for his sins. A New Year Eve never passes but that I think of John Graham,—and you will not wonder that it is so, for it was a fateful time in his sad life. I felt as though it were almost a supernatural coincidence that it should have been also the time of his death.

There are those who argue that a woman always knows when she is loved; this may be true, but the story-tellers will never admit it,—like Miss Belle Moses, who has described for ROMANCE this tender love-scene. Indeed, a large class of stories could never be made, if this contested point were once settled in accord with the conviction of some of us.

ARTY.

THE sun had gone down and the beach was deserted. Not that the straggling settlement was much of a resort, nor the season far advanced, but the simple inhabitants were rejoicing in the fair spring weather after an unusually severe winter.

They came from their overcrowded houses to breathe the pure air and bask in the warm rays that fell upon the sand and danced on the shimmering sea. The more enterprising among them were busy preparing for the approaching summer, mending their fishing-nets and tackle, baling out their boats and painting them anew, for they would carry many a fair cargo during the coming months.

The women and girls made baskets. Their deft fingers fashioned them of every conceivable shape and style, and these were to be filled with dainties which the sea served up,—shells, sea-weed, curious bits of coral, and queer driftings that the waves washed ashore.

Sandy Point was midway between two watering-places. It would have remained unnoticed but for its race of hardy fishermen, whose boats and services were eagerly sought by the pleasure-loving crowds; whose strong frames and iron sinews were languidly admired by the young men who wore immaculate boating-flannels.

And thus, year by year, the hamlet rose above its obscurity, the battered houses began to show signs of renovation—even of ornament. The maidens gave coquettish touches to their simple attire; the matrons took more pride in their homely duties; the men, young

and old, awoke from their lethargy, influenced no doubt by glimpses of the gay world which surrounded them, until gradually Sandy Point assumed a rugged beauty which rendered it a most attractive haven in the social turmoil.

This evening the sun had vanished with unusual splendor. The day had been exceptionally mild, and the sea was only stirred with a gentle heaving and a far-off sound of hushed breakers. The western sky was a crimson glow, touched with amber here and there, and the distant hills were crowned with glory. It was a scene of unspeakable beauty, and somehow, in a vague way, this was felt and appreciated by a lonely figure on the beach, a lithe, straight, youthful figure, standing quite still, close to the lapping, murmuring water, and listening absently to the evening cry of the sea-birds, the faint lowing of the cattle, and the distant tinkling of their bells.

It was very peaceful—and yet the young fisherman, as he stood there, a picture of health and strength, felt strangely at variance with all about him. There was a surging in his heart—a wild longing that threatened to burst its bonds; and with an impatient movement he shifted the oars which he carried across his sturdy shoulder.

He was a handsome fellow, this child of the hamlet, —a combination of physical vitality and sensitive nature which placed an invisible barrier between him and his coarser comrades. Not that he held aloof, but rather that he was foremost in all their sports and industries, obtaining among them a sort of prestige which they readily yielded.

No fisherman along the coast could make such a day's work as Arty Green when the humor seized him; and none knew better how to guide his boat into the surest places. It was Arty who found the choice bits of grass or reed for the basket-makers, and whose quick eye discovered the rarest ocean-treasures. It was Arty who lent spirit to the occasional dances in which the young men and women indulged, when the moonlight shed its rays of silver along the beach, and some stray

fiddler drew measured tunes from his cracked instrument in their behalf.

It was Arty whose deep, powerful voice would rise in sweetness above the roar of the restless sea. There was none round about to equal it, as its wildly harmonious cadence swelled to a wonderful volume or died away in emotion. It was when he sang that one felt the singular fervor—that spirit apart from the hamlet—which had entered his soul and refined it above that of his fellow-fishermen.

But now as he stood in reflection in the calm afterglow of the evening, no music would come to his lips. Instead, a sigh forced its passage between them,—a sigh which was borne on the waters, which came from his heart and which fell like lead on the heart of another.

A touch upon his arm roused him, and he turned with a start to face a girl whose form looked shadowy in the fading light.

"What's keepin' you, Arty? It ain't surely fish you're thinkin' of this time o' day. Truth, but I'd know you better, my lad! It's not dreamin' you'd be, but balin' your boat and gettin' all ready, wouldn't you now?"

"Yes, Elsbeth."

"'Yes—Elsbeth!' an' many's the time ye'd be sayin' 'No—Elsbeth!' if only for the sake of a quarrel! It would be kiss an' make up after, so I cared naught. But now you're sparin' o' your kisses, Arty, an' I'm lonesome these long, busy days. Will ye be comin' home now—or——"

There was an odd tremor in the girl's voice,—the blithe voice which he used to love so well. It stirred within him a sudden pang, as he bent down and kissed the pouting lips.

"Don't fret, Beth. It's all right, an' I'm comin'."

He turned slowly and glanced wistfully toward the hills which loomed in the distance. Then, as he drew the girl close to his side, he noticed the rebound of her elastic spirits, and blamed himself that she should be the plaything of his moods, which ill-suited such a merry, winsome lass.

"Oh, I know what you're thinkin'," she said, as they paced slowly along the beach. "Yes, I know, Arty, well, an' it's like ye for all the world—but don't worrit. Now that Miss Barbara's come, you'll be fillin' your pockets, and belike we'll get married in the fall. She's been good to us, Arty."

"Yes."

"Ah! you couldn't gainsay that! An' she so young, an' rich, an' beautiful! It was the singin' that took her notice, for you've a voice fit to lift the heart out of one's body, if I do say it!" and Elsbeth's eyes lingered lovingly on the stalwart figure by her side.

Her glance was both fearless and modest, and surely to her and none other belonged the right without question to look at him; but somehow a mist rose between them, and Arty seemed far away from her as he fastened his gaze on the pebbles which he crunched beneath every footstep. Over the girl's laughing features came a look of pain and of wonder. This mood was new and perplexing to her. It was not Arty's way to be silent, and she sought in her mind for the reason; for though his arm was about her, she felt little warmth in the pressure. It gave her no sense of protection.

Elsbeth could not understand it,—this feeling that moved her so strangely. Her nature was simple and trusting; her life was open as daylight; but her quick woman's instinct had warned her of something amiss with her lover. And Arty—his thoughts were ascending those far distant hills over yonder, and out of the gathering darkness a face came distinctly before him. It was Barbara's face and not Elsbeth's,—a lily, instead of the wild rose. And innocent Elsbeth scarce dared to glance toward the height of this vision, adored from afar, the fair creature who came every year to the hamlet.

Like a spirit, she flitted among the rude people there; her soft hand soothed many an aching head, her sweet voice hushed many a demon; and the rough fisher-folk, when she passed them, bowed low, as they might to an angel.

And Barbara Gayle, loved and petted, had singled out this pair of sweethearts, on whom to shower her

kindness. She brought her gay friends in the summer, and always took Arty as her pilot, for his boats were the largest and stanchest, and he knew every turn in the coast-line; and no one could dream, as he sat there, guiding the small craft and singing as the sun died away on the waters, that all of his simple, passionate heart had been transferred to Barbara's keeping. He knew that he was bold,—that this secret must always be locked up within him; and his proud spirit rose in rebellion against his station, and the social bond which goaded and pressed him. Poor little Elsbeth's caresses were the last bitter drops in his cup.

Elsbeth could bear the silence no longer. Again her touch roused him, and she said timidly:

"Now that Miss Barbara's come, Arty, she'll be hirin' your boats for the season. Have you rigged them up, lad?"

"All but the *Pelican.* She ain't good for much. But maybe, after all, Miss Barbara may want somebody else to sail about with her fine folks. Who knows?"

He spoke with a repressed bitterness which could not escape his companion.

"Why, Arty!" she exclaimed. "How you talk! As if Miss Barbara'd have anybody else! Who can sing for her like you, I'd have you tell me?"

She could not see the quick flush that mounted to his face as he answered slowly:

"My singin' ain't for sale, 'Beth—leastways to you and—and—Miss Barbara."

"But think of her friends, Arty," persisted the girl, "and the silver pieces that clinked in your pocket, and all because of your voice! I haven't heard you sing in a long time. Why don't you try? It would sound so nice just now when everything is still!"

They had paused in their walk, having reached a sheltered nook where they sat together on pleasant evenings. Elsbeth perched herself upon her favorite seat, but Arty remained standing beside her, his hand resting lightly on her shoulder, and his dark eyes gazing out on the broad expanse of sea and sky.

"Well, what shall I sing?" he asked.

"One of the old songs, Arty."

Then he freed his voice. It was only a fishing ballad, but the words were lost in the weird, plaintive notes. As pure and unfettered as the air about them, his voice gathered volume and sweetness in its flight. The poetical nature of the singer escaped the coarse bonds that confined it, and Arty forgot for the moment the prose of his normal existence.

Elsbeth was painfully conscious, as she heard him, that hers was a sphere far beneath him, and for the first time his singing brought sadness instead of pleasure. She rose suddenly as the last echoes died away.

"It's growin' late, an' I'm cold," she said with a shiver. "It's time I was at home, Arty." And they walked on in silence the rest of the way.

"Will you come in?" she asked, pushing open the little gate in front of her house.

"No, not this evening. I'm busy. Good-night, Elsbeth," and, kissing her gently, he strode away, leaving her to wonder sadly, and watch his vanishing figure through her tears.

The summer came on, and the two watering-places on either side of Sandy Point had become so overcrowded that a few hastily constructed cottages had invaded the quiet hamlet, looking very strange among the primitive dwellings, but adding considerably to the dawning prosperity of the place. Visitors were no rare sight now, and gradually the lonely beach began to assume a festive appearance, while the simple fishermen looked on in wonder at the doings of the newcomers.

Arty's hands were full, for Miss Barbara Gayle came often with her friends. She was, as she said, determined to raise Sandy Point from its obscurity, and had already become queen of the little circle which had gathered there.

She still took a great interest in Arty and his sweetheart, and saw with concern that all was not going well with her favorites. There was no quarrel, for they were constantly together; but a perpetual gloom had chased away the radiant vivacity from Arty's face,—

and was it imagination, or in truth were Elsbeth's cheeks less ruddy than of yore? Barbara was quick to note these changes, because a new happiness had made her own life fairer, and she was troubled at the vague shadow which she saw dimly, but could not grasp.

Arty seldom sang now. On the rare occasions when she asked him, Barbara found that he did not like to sing, so she ceased to urge him, though she never failed to press him into service whenever she could, often wondering, as she watched his graceful movements and his strange gravity, what earthquake had unsettled his little world.

This question was perplexing her as she made her way over the sands one afternoon, to the spot where Arty was at work repairing his boats. She looked like a picture in her white flannels and with her pretty golden hair tucked up under her white sailor hat. Arty did not hear her light tread until she stood beside him. Then he looked up with a start, and his bronzed face flushed as he hastily took off his cap.

Miss Barbara laughed softly.

"I did not mean to startle you, Arty, by coming like a ghost,—but I want to speak to you, if you can find me a seat somewhere. Don't let me interrupt you. You can listen while you work."

"The *Pelican's* clean and dry if you'll step up a bit, Miss Barbara."

He gave his hand to help her over the little embankment. The young lady settled herself comfortably, while Arty laid by his heavier labor and took a quantity of fishing-cord to disentangle.

"Now, Arty," began Miss Barbara, "I am going to tell you a great secret, and you are the first one here to know it."

She paused in embarrassment, and looked down at the young fisherman, whose face became suddenly very pale, and whose hands trembled over his work.

"Well, Arty, can't you guess? You are usually quick at guessing," she said at last, impatiently.

"Yes," he said slowly and without lifting his eyes. "You—you—want to tell me that you're goin' to be married."

Barbara's face was all aglow. She clapped her hands delightedly.

"Bravo!" she cried, "and the lucky man, Arty, can you guess who he is? Ah! I'm sure you can."

Arty shook his head.

"Then I'll tell you. It is Mr. Eric Hartwell. You remember he came here last summer and was so pleased with your voice? Arty, you never sing now. Why is it?"

"I'm too busy," he replied.

"But you were just as busy last year, it seems to me. Well, never mind. When Mr. Eric comes, he will see about it. He wrote me he would be here soon. His mother is not strong, and needs the sea-air, so they have engaged rooms in the last new cottage. And, Arty, you'll be very nice to them both, for my sake, won't you?"

The poor fellow made no answer. A lump had risen in his throat. A mist blurred his sight, but he fixed his eyes resolutely on his work. Barbara looked puzzled at his silence, which she thought she understood, for she said after a while:

"I wish I could see you happy, too, Arty. When shall you and Elsbeth be able to marry?"

"God knows!"

He sprang up with sudden vehemence and faced her, speaking wildly,—yet trying in his clumsy way not to frighten his already startled companion.

"I've been thinkin' it all out, Miss Barbara, and—and I'm not half good enough for Elsbeth. That's the truth of it. I ain't humble enough to try and deserve her. My temper's soured somehow, and I might break her heart,—poor girl!—with my gruff ways."

Barbara looked at him in wonder. "I can't understand it at all," she said sadly.

"Don't try, Miss Barbara, please. I can't tell you. It'll all come right some time, I reckon, but——" he raised his haggard eyes beseechingly—"don't tell Elsbeth. I'm rumpled up in my mind. She don't suspect."

"Ah, but she does," said Barbara reproachfully.

"She's not the same, either. Oh, Arty, what have you done!" and forgetful of her own bright future, her eyes filled with tears.

"Don't, don't!" cried Arty piteously. "Indeed, Miss Barbara, I'll do my best by Elsbeth."

"I trust so," she answered gravely as she rose. Arty helped her from the boat. It was useless to prolong this painful scene, and the daylight was beginning to fade.

"Things may be brighter after a while," she added cheerfully, and then she left him alone with his despair.

And now began the sharp struggle which lasted all through that long summer with a dreadful persistence. A sickening sense of repression sunk Arty's every good impulse in torpor.

The days passed like phantoms to him; he scarcely knew one from the other. Sunday alone he distinguished by the far-off sound of the church-bells.

The change in him was pitiful. One could not avoid noticing the total absence of his old buoyancy. Elsbeth's heart ached, but she could do nothing. There were no confidences between them now. A few months back, she would have questioned him; but then there was not this something between them.

It was well that she had her simple duties to engross her; gradually she withdrew from her former companionships, becoming absorbed in her work, taking little account of the ready sale her baskets brought her. Arty went on long fishing expeditions, and Elsbeth, sitting alone on the beach, would watch his boat disappear beyond the horizon-line, and then would turn with a sad interest and envy to the two happy lovers who sauntered daily on the sands.

September came. Eric Hartwell and his mother lingered far beyond the season at Sandy Point, and Barbara never found the sea so beautiful as now, when the breezes became stiffer and the waters rushed to the shore in huge breakers, while foam and spray dashed everywhere. Perhaps it was love that made everything attractive in her eyes; but there was a fascination in the roar of the ocean and the leaden sky, even after the

Hartwells were gone. She felt an irresistible desire to linger in the dear haunts, and often she and Elsbeth would take long walks together on the desolate beach.

Barbara saw little of Arty. His wild words had frightened her, and she tried to avoid him until his morbid mood should have left him; but one day she chanced to meet him as he was stepping into his boat, and she was startled at the drawn look on his handsome face. His eyes were bright and feverish, but his manner was quiet and respectful as usual, and reassured her.

"I envy you your sail, Arty, on this fresh day," she said. "Couldn't you take me aboard and land me a few piers below? I need some salt air."

Arty flushed, and then grew pale as suddenly.

"It—it's cloudy," he managed to say. "There's a storm comin'."

"Not soon," declared Barbara, "and I am a good sailor. However, if you don't want me,"—she added slowly, "I can go along the beach just as well. I thought a sail would be pleasanter."

"I'll take you," answered Arty quietly, but he set his teeth hard as he helped her into the boat, and breathed quickly, as if in pain.

For some time not a word was spoken. Barbara sat enjoying the fresh gusts of wind which seemed to fill her with new vigor. She had her thoughts to occupy her, and did not notice that, instead of keeping near the shore, they were drifting further out to sea.

A drop of rain upon her cheek startled her, and she looked around anxiously. Only the green turbid water stretched away on every hand. The coast-line had entirely disappeared, and the little boat was rocking violently.

"Oh, Arty!" she cried in dismay, more frightened now by the look on his face than by all the menacing dangers which had loomed up so suddenly.

He laughed,—a reckless sound that had no mirth in it.

"We're just sailin', Miss Barbara. You said you liked a sail, didn't you? The *Pelican* won't last long out here—but it don't much matter. The water's not so

very cold. We'll just go down in one of those big waves." He spoke rapidly and all his restraint gave way. "I was goin' alone," he went on, "but you came and begged me to take you. I told Elsbeth last night, —ah! I don't know—never mind! I'll let the boat drift now. We can't hold out much longer, and I won't mind dyin' much—with you." He leaned forward unsteadily, and the hand which he laid on Barbara's was burning.

She shrank away, and though half-dazed, she tried to think calmly, face to face with this sudden and awful danger, and learning for the first time the secret of this young, untutored heart.

Her life, she knew, and Arty's, hung upon the slenderest of threads. The storm was muttering in the distance. The boat was tossing like a helpless thing, and Arty himself was speaking incoherently in the wildness of fever. Her only hope lay now in the thought that Elsbeth's faithful, loving heart might have divined something from the poor fellow when they last met.

This was a faint hope at best, but she caught at it and hushed the despair which assailed her. Closing her eyes for a moment, she murmured a prayer in the silence. Then she laid a cool hand on his hot one, and tried to speak calmly and clearly.

"You were wrong, Arty, to come so far out to sea," she said. "They will be frightened at home."

"Yes, yes. Mr. Eric will be frightened, too, but it won't matter. You will be with me—safe with me."

"Yes, safe, I hope," answered Barbara with a blanching face. "You would not hurt me, Arty."

"No—no. They say it don't hurt much. I was goin' alone—but I have you. Shall I sing now?" and without waiting for a reply, he broke forth into exquisite melody. Song after song floated out on the troubled sea. Heedless of the rain and of the lurching of the boat, he sang on, while Barbara strained her eyes for some sign of help.

The sound of Arty's music rose above the storm. Barbara was chilled and dripping. She clasped her

hands in silent agony. Was she fated to die, thus forsaken in the pride of her youth and her beauty, with life smiling on her so brightly?

Where was Elsbeth? Surely, that wild singing must reach her ears. Barbara felt it throbbing in her heart, in her very brain. Was there no help?

Suddenly a sound came to her,—faint indeed,—but to her ears it seemed like a trumpet-blast.

Arty was beyond noticing anything now, but Barbara heard it again and again. She could not answer, but Arty's voice would guide, for it rang out with wonderful power whenever the wind subsided. Her strength was nearly giving way, but she held up bravely, until out of the mist struggled help at last! Among the sturdy crew she caught a glimpse of Elsbeth's anxious face, and then she knew no more.

At length a faint sigh and a motion told Elsbeth that life was returning, the blue eyes were opened, and slowly the girl understood what had happened.

"Arty!" she whispered. "Where is he?"

Elsbeth's voice trembled. "Saved like yourself, Miss Barbara, but the poor lad's ravin' in fever. I'm grieved, but I'm glad to know a fever's all that ailed him. I'll nurse him back to life, please God, and—and there won't be any more trouble. Poor Arty!"

Barbara lay still through the rough passage home. She was thankful Elsbeth saw no further. It would all come right, she was sure. A few days later, she went home.

And it did "come right," as Arty slowly recovered. Elsbeth noticed one day that his arm held her closely, and his dark eyes seemed asking a pardon. His dear face grew tender and pleading,—a smile flitted over his features and she was content. His wandering heart, which never meant to be aught but true, had come back again to its own.

Yes, it is too bad! We all sorrow over their disappearance as much as did poor Mélusine, in this sweet little fantasy by Alphonse Daudet. It is put into English for ROMANCE by Wm. B. Trites.

THE FAIRIES OF FRANCE.

"PRISONER, stand up," said the judge.

There was a movement on the bench, which reeked with oil, and something hideous and tottering leaned against the rail. It was a bundle of rags, of rents, of odds and ends, of faded flowers, of faded feathers. Add to that a poor, seamed, withered yellow face, with the malice of two small black eyes glittering among its wrinkles, as a lizard glitters in the cranny of an old wall.

"What is your name?" the judge asked her.

"Mélusine."

"What did you say?"

She repeated gravely: "Mélusine."

Under his great military mustache the judge smiled a little, but he went on slowly:

"Your age?"

"I do not know."

"Your business?"

"I am a fairy!"

At that the audience, the lawyers, the judge himself, everybody, joined in one great burst of laughter; but the old woman was not at all disurbed, and in her small, clear, quavering voice, which mounted high above their heads and hovered there like a voice in a dream, she resumed:

"Ah! the fairies of France! Where are they? All dead, my good gentlemen. I am the last; there are no more left but me. Indeed, it is a great loss, and France was far more beautiful when she had her fairies. We were the poetry of the land, its faith, its simplicity, its childhood. All the spots we haunted, the depths of leafy woods, the clear water-courses, the turreted old

chateaux, the misty pools, the large, marshy heaths, took from our presence I know not what of magic and mystery. Once in a long while, we would be seen trailing our robes across a moonbeam, or flitting through the meadows on the tips of the grasses. The peasants loved us, they paid us great honor.

"With the adoration in their artless minds, our brows gleaming with pearls, our wands, our enchanted distaffs, mingled a touch of terror. Therefore our haunts were always undisturbed. The ploughmen avoided the green alleys where we met; and, as we reverenced all things old—we, the world's oldest—France left all her forests to grow wild for us, and her columns to crumble without attempt at hindrance.

"But the times have changed. Roads of iron are here. In hollowing their tunnels they choked up our pools. They cut down so many of our trees that soon there was no spot known where we might meet. The peasants did not believe in us any more. In the evening, when we tapped upon the shutters, Robin said: 'It is the wind,' and went to sleep again. The women came to do their washing in our streams. From that time forth it was all over with us. Our lives lay in the people's faith, and when faith was destroyed, we also were destroyed wholly. The virtue is gone out of our wands, and from the potent queens that we were, we have fallen to be old, wrinkled hags, wilful as the fairies that are forgotten; also we have our bread to gain with our hands, which do not know how to do anything. At first you might have seen us in the forests, wearily dragging fagots of dead wood, or gathering the acorns from the sides of the paths. But the woodmen were hard on us, the peasants thrust us from the pleasant ruins. So, like the poor who can find no way of living in the country, we came to seek out work in your great towns.

"Some of us toiled in the cotton-mills. Others sold apples, during the winter, on your bridges, or beads before the doors of your churches. We pushed carts full of oranges, we held out to the passers-by bouquets which no one cared to buy, and the little children

mocked at our wagging chins, and the policemen ordered us away, and the omnibuses knocked us down. Then sickness, want; a hospital-sheet thrown over the face. Ah, see how France has let all her fairies die. But well has she been punished!

"Yes, yes, good sirs, you may laugh. But now we have seen what things happen in a land where there are no more fairies. We have seen all those incredulous and sneering peasants opening their gates to the Prussians and showing them the best roads to take. Lo, Robin did not believe in sorcery any more; neither did he believe in devotion to his country! Ah! had we been there, we fairies, of all those Germans who invaded France not one would have gone out alive. Our spells, our witch-fires, would have led them into the bogs. With all the pure springs that bear our names we would have mixed enchanted brews to drive them mad; and at our trysting-places, with one magic word, so thoroughly would we have confused the roads and rivers, so thoroughly entangled them in the thorny brush where they were always cowering, that M. de Moltke's little, catlike eyes would never have seen again. The peasants would have marched with us. Out of the gracious flowers of our heaths we would have made lotions for their wounds, we would have bound them up with soft lint; and on the battle-field the dying soldier would have seen the fairy of his canton leaning over his half-shut eyes and showing him a nook in the woods; a sunny turn of the road; some little thing which called back all his home. That is the way to wage a national war, a holy war. But alas! in lands that have stopped believing, in lands where they do not have fairies any more, such a war is not possible."

Then the delicate little voice faltered for a moment, and the judge said:

"But all this does not tell us what you were doing with that oil which was found on you when you were arrested."

"I was burning Paris, sir," replied the old woman coolly. "I was burning Paris because I hate it, because it is always laughing, because it has killed us.

It is Paris that has sent out savants to analyze our wonderful fair springs and to report precisely on them that they contain 'iron and sulphur in solution.' Paris has mocked us in its theatres. Our enchantments have become jokes, our miracles, stage-tricks, and the people have seen so many evil faces flaunting by in our rose-colored robes, in our winged cars, illumined by a moonshine made of Bengal fire, that now they cannot think of us without laughing. Once there used to be little children who knew us by our names, loved us, feared us a little; but now, instead of the beautiful, gilded books wherein they learned our stories, Paris puts science in the children's hands—science, in fat old folios from which all wearinesses rise like a gray dust, blotting from their little eyes forever our enchanted palaces and our magic mirrors. Oh, yes, I would indeed be glad to see it blazing, this Paris of yours. I admit that I filled those boxes with the oil, and that I carried them myself to the best places, and that I cried out fiercely: 'Come, burn all, burn, burn!' "

"Of course this old woman is crazy," said the judge "Take her away."

Mr. Jerome K. Jerome considers the following story, written by Mr. Charles Dwight Willard for the *Argonaut*, one of the most notable productions of American humor.

THE EARLIER BIRD.

"I would to God thou and I knew where a commodity of good names were to be bought."—FALSTAFF, IN "HENRY IV."

[THERE were four men in the smoking compartment of a Pullman, in an overland train heading Westward. They talked of California—of its gold and the '49ers, of its fruits and wine, of its mountain scenery, and of the hospitality of its people. When the latter subject was reached, one of the travellers fetched a sigh so long and deep that it instantly attracted the notice of the others, and they asked its cause. He returned no answer. Then one of them demanded to know whether he had ever experienced the famous hospitality of the Californians, and to this question he made the following strange reply: "Yes, by proxy." Thereupon the others, burning with curiosity, besought him to make himself understood. This he did in the following tale:]

My first visit to the Golden State took place a number of years ago, when I was an inexperienced young man of about twenty-five. My home was in Cleveland, where my family had resided for many years. A trip to California, in those days, was looked upon as a great undertaking, and I began to talk it over with my numerous friends and relatives several weeks before I set out. Presently, I made a remarkable discovery. It was that every one of these friends and relatives had some acquaintance on the Pacific Coast, who would rejoice at the opportunity to welcome me afforded by a letter of introduction.

Now, it happened that, several years before, I had had a little experience with the practice of making friends by letter. When I went East to college, I carried a note to some people in Boston. I presented it,

and I am confident that no explorer of the Arctic regions ever encountered a lower temperature than that which enveloped my welcome. Now, as I understand a letter of introduction, it is a sort of a sight-draft, friendship being the consideration, drawn by your friend on the stranger, which you are empowered to collect—if you can. Your success depends upon several things: your friend's credit with the stranger, for one; the stranger's general solvency—that is, his capacity for friendship—for another; and his opinion of you as a collector, for a third. The whole transaction seems to me loose and irregular, and the risk falls entirely on the unfortunate bearer of the letter, who usually takes the thing on its face value.

At first, I tried by various evasions to get out of accepting these letters. But it would not work. People seemed to think that they were conferring some enormous favor on me, which, with the natural modesty of youth, I was seeking to decline. The more I held off, the greater was their zeal in my behalf, and in several instances, I am confident, it resulted in my having letters forced upon me which would otherwise have been forgotten. What could I do? Nobody ever heard of such a thing as declining a letter of introduction—it would be equivalent to saying: "I don't want to meet your friend; he may be good enough for you, but I have no use for him." So I accepted all that were offered, and concealed my true sentiments under an expansive mask of gratitude.

The number of these epistles increased with surprising rapidity. For not only did all my friends and relatives write themselves, but many of them dementedly went about asking people, to whom I was an utter stranger, for letters which should make me known to their friends in California. Then there were some letters which came spontaneously from the most unexpected quarters. For example, a friend would meet me and say:

"You don't know Colonel Jim Fairfax, do you?"

"No; I don't."

"Well, he told me the other day he had a friend out

on the Coast that he would like you to meet—he had heard somewhere of your California trip. So he gave me a letter of introduction—here it is. It's to the Hon. Patrick Casey—a member of the legislature. I thanked him, knowing that you would feel grateful for the attention."

"Certainly," I answered; "but as I never met Colonel Jim Fairfax, I hardly see how he——"

"Oh, that was all right. He just wrote the letter as if you were a friend of his. See?"

I opened the letter and saw. It was calculated to deceive the Hon. Patrick into the belief that Colonel Jim and I were like Damon and Pythias. I shudderingly added the letter to the heap, and I mention it now only as a sample of its class.

At last, when I was ready to start, the bundle of letters had grown so large that it positively frightened me. Indeed, at times I was half resolved to abandon the trip, solely on account of the premonition of evil that swept over me whenever I contemplated that awful heap. But I had now gone too far to back out, and depositing the letters in one corner of my trunk, I took my departure. There was a crowd at the station to see me off, and the last thing I heard, as the train started, was a general cry of:

"Be sure and present my letter to——"

Of course the request was superfluous—like most things said at partings—for the reason that I had already solemnly promised each one that I would deliver his letter.

In the quiet solitude of the first day's ride, I had nothing to do but think, and the bundle of letters provided me with plenty of subject-matter. They constituted a problem whose vexatious conditions drove me half distracted.

If I failed to deliver them—or to make at least an honest effort in behalf of each—I should break my promise to a number of people whose good opinion I held in high esteem. It would never do for me deliberately to admit, on my return, that I had scorned to make acquaintance with their friends, or that I had been in-

sensible to their kindness in giving me the letters. On the other hand, I doubted whether I could manufacture excuses delicate enough to be satisfactory, and at the same time in large enough numbers to go around. Having been trained to truth from my boyhood, I lacked the imaginative power which is needed for artistic mendacity. In fact, I was likely to find myself in the same embarrassing situation that is said to have overcome the Father of his Country: I could not tell a lie—that would get me out of the scrape.

So I finally settled it in my own mind that I must present all the letters.

Then the other horn of the dilemma began to gore me. Here were a lot of people who knew nothing of me, nor I of them. I was expected to hunt them up, at a great expense of time and trouble, and deliver to them a letter apiece all around, after the fashion of a conscientious and impartial mail-man. But that was not all. These letters practically involved a demand, on my part, for attentions, based on a *je-ne-sais-quoi* relationship between the sender and the recipient. Being a very young man, I was somewhat sensitive on the score of snubs, and I saw them looming up in unlimited numbers throughout the whole situation. The Boston experience was liable to be repeated on a magnificent scale.

The second day out I became acquainted with several of my fellow-passengers. One of them, a bright, young New Yorker, by the name of Yelverton, seemed to take a special fancy to me, and we put in several hours conversing together. He had visited the Coast before, and, although only a few years my senior, was evidently a man who had had a good deal of experience in the world. Naturally, after our acquaintance had progressed to a certain stage, I talked of the subject uppermost in my mind, and told him all about the letters.

I had hoped he would say something that would prove reassuring; on the contrary, he aggravated my woe.

"Why, my dear fellow," he said, "if you are going to undertake to deliver those epistles, you have my

sympathy. Just now the very words 'letter of introduction' are, to the average Californian, like a red rag to a bull. They are a hospitable people, but their good-nature has been so grossly imposed upon by the horde of impostors and mountebanks that has poured in, since the building of the railroad, that it is no longer easy for a stranger to get into their good graces. The letter-of-introduction device has been worked until it is threadbare, and the man who offers to present one risks an immediate arrest from the police, or even severer treatment at the hands of the vigilance committee."

"You frighten me," I said; "however, as my letters are all genuine, and bear the names of many of the most prominent people of Cleveland, I hardly expect to meet with difficulties of that sort."

"Probably not," said Yelverton; "but you may expect to be rather coldly treated."

"Well, blast the letters!" I exclaimed angrily; "I can see they are going to destroy half the pleasure of my visit to the Coast."

My annoyance seemed to afford Yelverton no small amusement, and he recurred several times to the subject after I had allowed it to drop.

It was a part of my plan to stop over in Denver about a week to visit some friends. Yelverton, also, made a brief stay in that place, and we occupied adjoining apartments in the same hotel. Once, when he happened to be in my room, I had occasion to look for something in my trunk, and I came upon the hated bundle of letters.

"Here are those infernal documents," I remarked, tossing the bundle over to the table near where he stood. He picked it up, felt of its thickness, and then gave a sardonic laugh.

"You are certainly in for it, my boy," he said, and put the letters back on the table amid a pile of newspapers and magazines.

Before his departure, which took place the next day, Yelverton made me promise that I would telegraph him when I left Denver, so that he might meet me on

my arrival at the Coast. I promised it unhesitatingly, for I was satisfied that his friendship would bring opportunities not to be slighted.

Various circumstances which I need not detail lengthened my stay in Denver from a week to nearly a month, and in the course of that time I quite forgot about the letters of introduction. When I was ready to depart, however, I thought of them with a sudden and intense pang of discomfort.

I telegraphed to Yelverton, and proceeded to pack my trunk. Just as I was about to turn the key, it suddenly occurred to me that I had not noticed the bundle of letters in its customary place in the corner of the till. I opened the trunk and investigated. The letters were not to be found, either in the till or elsewhere. Then I remembered that shortly after my arrival at the hotel I had taken them out to show to Yelverton, and had put them on the table. However, they were not there now.

I made a thorough search of the room; the letters had plainly disappeared.

I went immediately to the clerk and told my story. He sent for the head chamber-maid.

"Who takes care of Mr. Bonworthy's room?" he asked.

"Maggie," answered the head chamber-maid; "but Clara had that room when he first came."

"I have lost a package of letters," said I.

The two exchanged significant glances.

"Do you think they were stolen?" I asked; "no one could have any possible object——"

"Oh, no," said the clerk. Then he asked me if the letters were valuable.

"N-no," I said; "not exactly."

"Well, I'll tell you," said the clerk, evidently much relieved; "we let that girl Clara go, because she had a reckless way of burning up things that she found lying around in the rooms. If you have made a thorough search and you are sure the letters are not there, the chances are they are destroyed."

I found it difficult to repress my joy at this intelligence. It is to be doubted if the clerk and head cham-

ber-maid ever succeeded in explaining my strange conduct, in actually refusing to make a row when one was quite justifiable. I hastened back to the room and executed a fresh search, so as to satisfy my conscience. When I was absolutely convinced that the letters were gone, I danced about the room in a transport of glee. The awful incubus which had been weighing down my spirits was suddenly removed, and I breathed again.

"What a blockhead I am," I said to myself; "why did it never occur to me to destroy the letters, and claim, on my return, that they had been lost?"

Chance had supplied the excuse which imagination had been unable to conjure up. I continued my journey, light-hearted as a prisoner who has just secured his freedom.

Yelverton had advised me to stop over at Sacramento —one of the historic cities of the State—and visit the capitol and other points of interest. I adopted the suggestion. The train got into Sacramento in the morning, and I was driven right to a hotel.

I wrote my name on the register, and asked for a room for one day. The clerk whirled the book around, glanced at the name, and said:

"All right, Mr. Bon——why, are you Mr. Bonworthy? Elliot Bonworthy—of Cleveland?"

"Well," I said, with some dignity, "what did you imagine I wrote that name for—amusement?"

His tone and manner surprised and annoyed me. It was evident, however, that my cool answer had disconcerted him, for his hand shook as he pencilled the number of a room after my name, and his voice trembled when he called up the bell-boy.

Ten minutes later, just as I was completing a hasty toilet, there was a knock at my door, and, in answer to a "Come in," the clerk entered, followed by a tall, military-looking man. When the door was closed, the clerk motioned his hand toward me, and nodded.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Do I understand," said the military man, "that you acknowledge your name to be Elliot Bonworthy?"

"Of course I do," I answered, somewhat angrily.

"Well, I like his nerve," said the military man to the clerk, and the clerk grinned at me.

"Say," continued the military man, "have you any friends in this town?"

"No," I said; "I had some letters of introduction to several——"

The clerk gave a loud, derisive laugh.

"That settles it, Bill," he said to his companion; "you had better run him in. You can take him down to the city on the afternoon-train."

"What does all this mean?" I exclaimed.

Bill produced a paper from his pocket. "It means that you are under arrest," said he, "on a charge of obtaining money under false pretenses. We know all about your letter-of-introduction scheme; it may have worked all right in San Francisco, but it doesn't go here. Now, jest come along quietly, and there won't be any trouble; otherwise——"

I glanced at the warrant. There was my name, "Elliot Bonworthy," as plain as print. I don't need to remark that I was astonished and frightened. I had heard of men being mistaken for criminals and put to the necessity of proving their own identity, but here was I arrested under my own name, in a place where I had supposed myself utterly unknown. What could I do—or say? I asked a few questions, and learned that the crime that was charged had been committed in the city of San Francisco a week or two before. Of course I could prove an *alibi* at the trial—but, in the mean time, what was to be done to keep out of jail?

I accompanied Bill—"quietly," as he had suggested—to the sheriff's office, and we waited there until the next train left for San Francisco.

Bill proved to be rather an entertaining companion. The first half of the trip he did his best to convince me that I ought to make a full confession to him of all my various crimes. He promised to "stand in" and get me off with a light sentence. When he found this undertaking hopeless, he began to talk about the country, answering the questions which I, a stranger to the scenes through which we were passing, very naturally

asked. At length, however, as we were crossing the ferry from Oakland, when I expressed my satisfaction at beholding the Golden Gate for the first time, he turned on me, with a sheepish grin, and said:

"You'd better let up. It won't do no good. Of course you know the place as well as I do, and it's no use your tryin' to fill me full of prunes."

When we arrived in the city, we went directly to the sheriff's office.

"We will take you to the jail later on," said Bill, apologetically.

The sheriff dispatched a messenger after some of the complaining witnesses, and then proceeded to interview me. I told him my name, and explained that I was a tourist from Cleveland. He nodded his head and announced that the jig was up, and that I might as well confess, for they had a very good case against me.

Presently, two well-dressed men were ushered into the room. Bill accompanied them.

"This is the man," said the sheriff; "he acknowledges it—at least the name."

"He is not the man," said one of the new-comers, emphatically.

"He isn't?" exclaimed the sheriff, and Bill made a hasty reference to the infernal regions.

"No!" cried the gentleman; "I told you the fellow had a blonde mustache, blue eyes, was thick-set, and wore his hair parted nearly in the middle."

"Yelverton!" I exclaimed, springing up.

"That's one of his names," said the sheriff; "he went here under the name of Elliot Bonworthy, and he had an armful of letters of introduction, with which he worked the town. What do you know about him?"

"He stole those letters from me at Denver," I said.

"Oh, then you are the simon-pure Elliot Bonworthy?" said one of the gentlemen.

"I can prove it readily enough, if necessary," I said.

The sheriff and Bill began to make profuse apologies, to which I paid little attention, as I was anxious to learn of Yelverton and his performances.

"He arrived here nearly a month ago," said one of

the gentlemen, "and began immediately to make acquaintance by means of these letters—your letters, it appears. They were to many of the finest people in the city. So we took the man right in, for he talked and acted like a perfect gentleman. Well, sir, I don't suppose any man that ever came to this city got more elegant treatment than that fellow. Do you?" he asked, turning to his companion, who signified his entire agreement.

"Go on," I said, with an inward groan.

"The best private houses and the clubs were all open to him, and he received every possible attention. Several men I know gave him wine suppers. There wasn't a social event of importance to which he failed to have an invitation. He gave it out that he was sizing things up for a syndicate of Cleveland capitalists that thought of investing largely in mines. Well, sir, I calculate that in the three weeks that he put in in this city, he had probably one of the very largest times that any man ever enjoyed. And he wound the thing up by getting the names of three or four good business men on spurious drafts, and then suddenly disappeared from view."

"That was when I telegraphed him that I was coming," I said.

"Well," observed the speaker in conclusion, "if you have any more letters of introduction bearing that same name, I would not advise you to present them, for you are liable to get arrested every time you try one on."

I explained that Yelverton had captured the entire pack. The complaining witnesses then shook hands with me and departed. I imagine their experience with Yelverton discouraged them from any rash tenders of hospitality, for they did not suggest any improvement of our acquaintance. Indeed, it was a cool stand-off on both sides, for I did not fancy their sarcastic flings on the subject of the letters.

The next day the newspapers contained the whole story—the theft of the letters, Yelverton's performances, and my arrest. The account given of the brief but glorious career of my proxy—the spurious Mr.

Elliot Bonworthy—convinced me that the gentlemen I had met at the sheriff's office were quite right in saying he had enjoyed a "large time." As I read of suppers, dinners, fêtes, balls, excursions, honors, attentions, etc., my senses fairly reeled with anguish. All this good time really belonged to me; I had been cheated out of it, partly through my own stupid misgivings, and partly through the shrewdness and industry of this earlier bird.

Now then, gentlemen (concluded the passenger who had been asked to tell what he knew of the hospitality of the Californians), you understand what I mean by saying that I received my welcome on the Coast by proxy.